CITY JOURNAL

Autumn 2000

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A New Lincoln Center

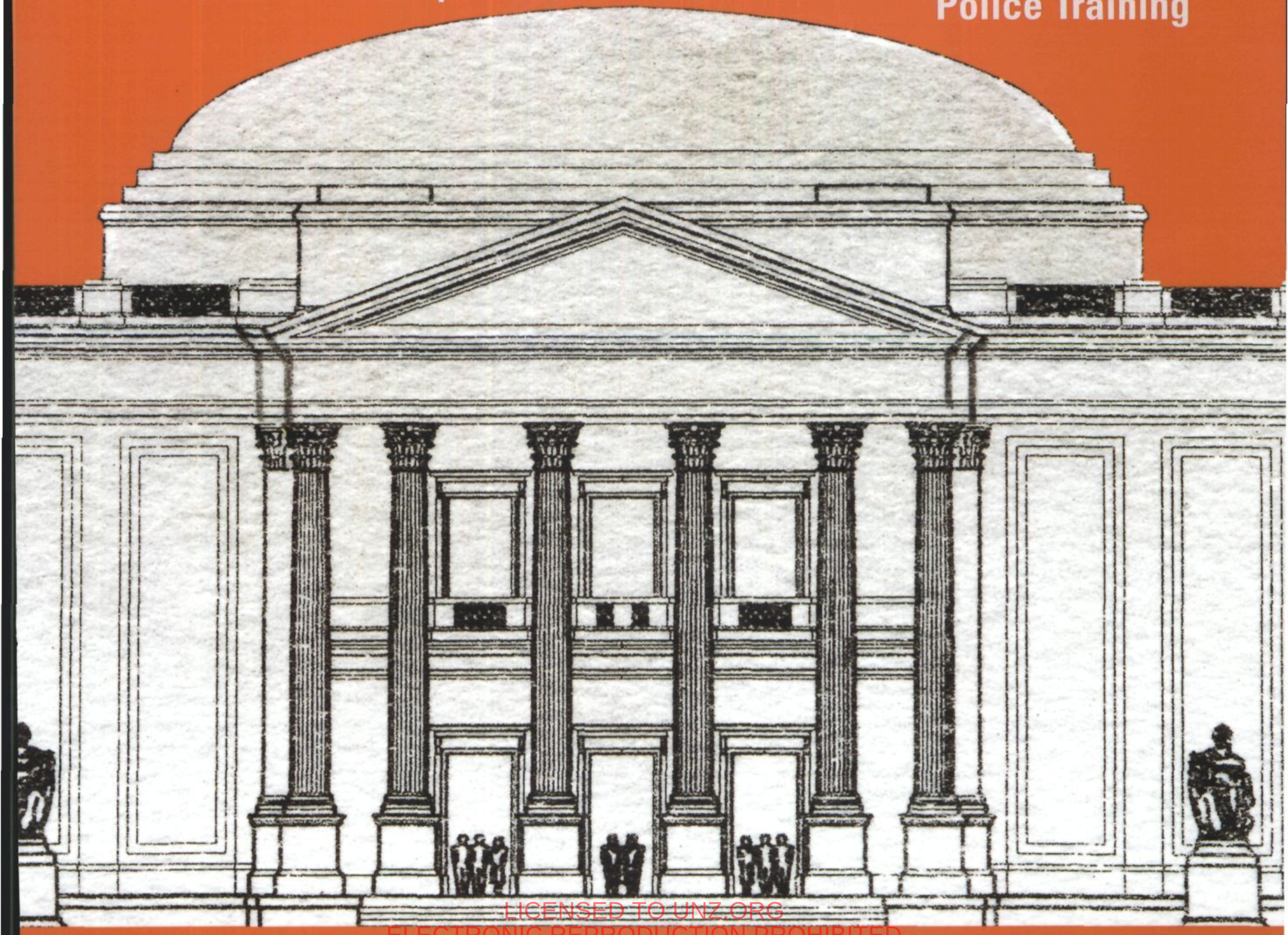
Plans by Quinlan Terry, Robert Adam, and Franck Lohsen McCrery

Lisa Graham Keegan

What Is Public Education?

Heather Mac Donald

Police Training



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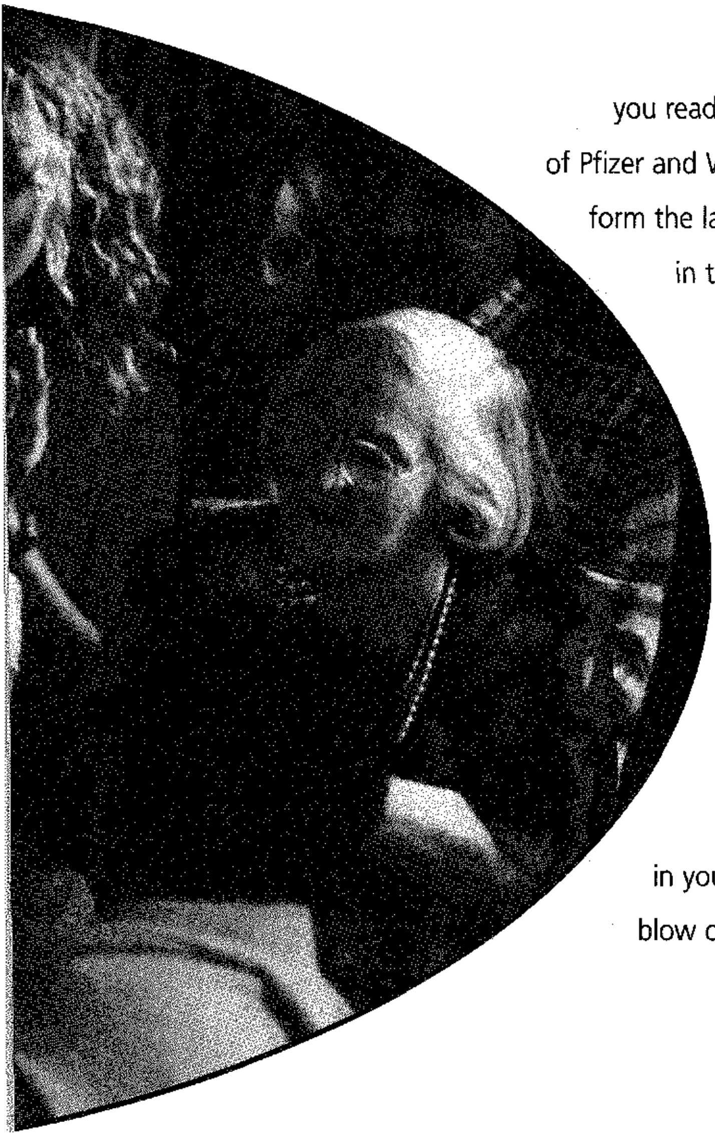

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We'll let our readers tell you why they never miss an issue.

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“The journal that saved the city.”

—The Public Interest

In Prospect

New York's remarkable current prosperity—long may it last—occasions this issue's unique cover feature, "A New Lincoln Center," beginning on page 14. The city's highly visible performing-arts complex requires very costly repairs, which will only need redoing in every subsequent generation. Why not, we thought, take a lesson from the farsighted trustees of the Museum of Natural History, who recently pulled down the old Hayden Planetarium and replaced it with the splendid Rose Center for Earth and Space? After all, Gotham is more flush with philanthropic tycoons than at any time since the Gilded Age; surely some of them will want to rise to the challenge of providing New York with monuments to equal the Gilded Age's magnificent, enduring, and beloved 42nd Street Library or Frick Museum. How uplifting it would be to show that we can still do it—that we can match the achievements of the generous benefactors on whose legacy we have lived for so long. And how much easier it would be to raise the $1.5 billion to build a new complex than merely to shore up the old one.

In the spirit of starting a civic conversation that might lead to such a momentous result, *City Journal* asked three architects to re-imagine Lincoln Center. We didn't pick at random but instead went to architects who shared our belief that the classical style was the right style for such a project, for reasons discussed beginning on page 14. Two of our architects are world-famous: Quinlan Terry, about whom *City Journal* has written more than once in the past (see "A New Order in Office Buildings," Spring 1996, and "It's Back to the Future in the Heart of London," Winter 1996, among others), and Robert Adam, who has written for *City Journal* ("Tradition and the Modern City," Autumn 1995) as well as having been written about by us ("It's Back to the Future in the Heart of London," Winter 1996). In addition, we asked a fledgling firm, Franck Lohsen McCrery, to submit designs as well. Its principals, Michael M. Franck, Arthur C. Lohsen, and James C. McCrery II, are all apprentices or former apprentices of celebrated architect Allan Greenberg, also mentioned in several *City Journal* articles (including, most recently, "After Modernism," Spring 2000). For all their shared classicism, the three designs that begin on page 18 are very different from one another, and their differences suggest how infinitely flexible, how endlessly capable of being made into something new the classical idiom really is. We look forward to the day when a future *City Journal* cover will sport a photograph, rather than our current drawing, of a *real* new classical Opera House, in all the lasting solidity of limestone.

This issue contains two remarkably interesting education stories that also couldn't be more different from each other. In "What Is Public Education?" on page 36, Arizona's well-known and revolutionary public schools chief Lisa Graham Keegan argues that defenders of public education who assume that public education can only be the ossified, century-old school-district system that prevails today are caught in a time warp. It would be just as much a public-school system if you gave each child equal public funding, gave parents maximum choice of where to send their kids to school, and imposed tough standards upheld by rigorous tests—and it would be a system that would work a lot better than the obsolete existing model.

Heather Mac Donald moves far away from the world of public schools in her absorbing saga of New York's Police Academy, "How to Train Cops," on page 46, a tour de force (so to speak) of vivid reporting. Critics of the NYPD charge, among many other complaints, that Gotham's police training doesn't prepare recruits to police the city in a "racially sensitive" way. Nonsense, Mac Donald finds. The department already requires "sensitivity" training, though it is a complete waste of time. More to the point, Mac Donald found, recruits are cheerfully nondiscriminatory, and the seasoned cops who come back to the Academy for in-service training don't think in terms of black or white but of good and bad, a discrimination they are extremely accurate in making, regardless of race. What cops most need is more of the Academy's excellent training in how to get suspects to comply just by talking to them—by "verbal judo" rather than force. It's a technique that works wonders.

Don't miss, as well, William J. Stern's "Why Gotham's Developers Don't Develop" (page 62). It will help you understand why New York lacks enough apartments and offices—not to mention a Lincoln Center the city can be proud of. ■

Soundings

Welfare Reform's Benefit to Kids

Child advocates predicted reforming welfare would harm kids. They had it exactly wrong.

During the emotional national debate over welfare reform, the child advocates and politicians who opposed reform warned that forcing welfare mothers to work would place their kids at much greater risk of neglect and abuse. Remember New York senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's apocalyptic prophecy that millions of children "would be put to the sword" if welfare reform became law?

Well, guess what? This summer, the Department of Health and Human Services released a report showing that substantiated cases of child neglect and maltreatment actually fell each of the two years after welfare reform passed—from 14.7 per 1,000 kids in 1996 to 12.9 in 1998, a 12.2 percent drop. Both anecdotal evidence and state figures suggest that next year's HHS data will show the trend continuing. Last year in New York City, there were 23 child fatalities in households with a history of abuse and neglect, down from 36 in 1998 and the fewest since 1983.

How did those who predicted catastrophe get it so wrong? They relied on two flawed assumptions. The first was that uneducated and unskilled welfare mothers would never find jobs and so would no longer be able to provide basic food and shelter for their kids. As a result, the children would be neglected and wind up in foster care. This proved false almost immediately, as former welfare recipients flooded into the workforce, cutting welfare rolls 50 percent in three years.

The second assumption, often referred to as the "stress hypothesis," says that, even if former welfare mothers do find work, the economic pressure of holding down a low-paying job will make them less available for their kids—or, worse, cause them to lash out and become, as the National Center for Children in Poverty put it, "more harsh and punitive."

It didn't happen. After exhaustively reviewing the relevant literature for her recent book *What Money Can't Buy*, left-leaning University of Chicago sociologist Susan Meyer concludes that people who possess those qualities that employers value—diligence, honesty, anger management, and reliability—also tend to be more effective parents. Defenders of the stress hypothesis never considered that work might actually be educating long-term welfare recipients in those virtuous qualities that their employers want but that also make them better moms. The work ethic really is an ethic.

Does the decline in child neglect and abuse mean that opponents of reform will reconsider their core assumptions? Don't hold your breath. They continue to scour the country for bad news that might prop up their tottering beliefs. But it's increasingly clear that welfare reform is helping not just welfare mothers but their kids, too.

—Kay S. Hymowitz

The Frozen Neighborhood

If Harlem's spokesmen get their way, the neighborhood will always be poor.

Not too long ago, New York City was sensibly auctioning off derelict Harlem property to the highest bidder, believing that the market knew best what use to make of it, whether it's to build a Tower Records, a Starbucks, or who knows what. Then Harlem's "community leaders" began to complain. "The highest bidder," stressed Manhattan borough president Virginia Fields, "does not necessarily know what's best for a community." City Council member Bill Perkins, who represents central Harlem, agreed: "Without a plan for the land, it will be at best accidental that the vision of the community is fulfilled." This summer, the *New York Times* reports, Perkins blocked an auction of 24 plots of vacant land in his district to thwart what the councilman calls "speculators and profiteers." Can't trust that invisible hand.

What's best for the community, Harlem's spokesmen believe, is more and more low-income housing. Thus Fields, together with the city's Housing Department, devised a clever scheme: the city would now sell for $1 vacant lots to developers who could come up with viable proposals to build "affordable" housing on the sites.

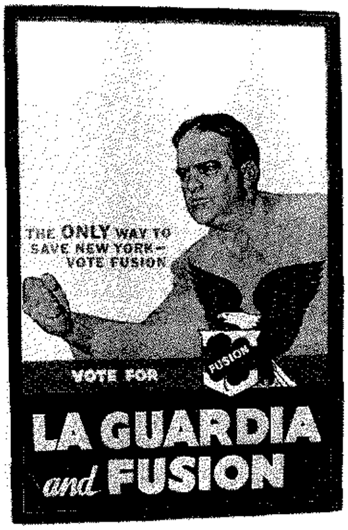
The giveaway is a misguided approach to revitalizing Harlem's large swathes of developable land. By assuming that government knows best what to do with the property, this course prevents us from ever learning what new and creative uses the market might bring to it. Worse, it's hard to believe that more subsidized low-income housing is what Harlem needs. The profusion of it in the neighborhood has kept the area from joining fully in the revival of Manhattan's Upper West Side, notwithstanding all the revivification that has happened north of 125th Street. Subsidized housing becomes property locked evermore into a particular low-value use.

But equally troubling is the idea of "the community" that Fields, Perkins, and Harlem's spokesmen in general embrace. Call it the frozen neighborhood. In their vision, tomorrow's Harlem will be just like today's: largely poor, largely minority, forever in need of low-income housing, no matter how much prosperity the city enjoys or how much welfare reform succeeds. The Harlem politicians who defend this idea treat anything that might change the neighborhood—outside investment, say, or gentrification—as a threat. It's why at least some Harlem leaders were unhappy with the first round of lot "sales" in April. Only one Harlem-based developer won building rights (out of six winners). After all, this action should belong to the community.

Of course, for politicians whose livelihood depends on delivering government-subsidized housing to grateful, and dependent, tenants, these things are threats because they're signs of a living city with a vital economy. In a living city, neighborhoods go through cycles of decline and renewal, as old residents move out and new ones arrive. A new Harlem might be very different—economically and demographically—from today's. It might have little low-income housing, or none.

To say the living city would hurt the poor is ridiculous. In fact, it would benefit the poor by providing abundant opportunities for upward mobility. But it might make Harlem's "community leaders" painfully obsolete. The Giuliani administration should resist putting any conditions on future Harlem land sales. Doing so would be an important step toward thawing the frozen neighborhood.

—Howard Husock



COLLECTION OF DAVID J. & JANICE L. FRENT(4)

Taylor-Made Taxpayer Abuse

A Rockefeller-era law is busting municipal budgets in suburban New York. Gotham is next.

When Suffolk County Executive Robert J. Gaffney announced his latest budget in September, he should have been bringing good news. A nearly decade-long economic boom had put the county in solid financial shape, with the general-fund budget boasting a healthy surplus. But Gaffney had to ask for a fat 11 percent tax hike to fill a huge $35 million hole in the county's law-enforcement budget.

State arbitrators dug that hole earlier in the year when they awarded Suffolk's nearly 2,000 police officers a spectacular new contract that hiked their already generous $70,000-plus base salary 20 percent over the next four years. By 2003, the average Suffolk County patrolman—already among the highest-paid in the nation—will make a mind-bending $103,000 annually. Salaries in neighboring Nassau County, where police compensation is, if anything, even more extravagant than in Suffolk, are poised for a similar upward spike. This at a time when the county teeters on the brink of bankruptcy, in part thanks to such generous police pay.

How did this happen? Weak-kneed politicians get some of the blame, but the real problem is the state's 1966 Taylor Law. Named for a University of Pennsylvania professor who helped write the law at Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller's behest, the legislation banned public-sector strikes and set up the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) to resolve future public-sector labor disputes. If negotiations between a public union and a municipality reach an impasse, a PERB arbitrator steps in and makes a binding decision that neither party can dispute.

The PERB works as a relentless machine to drive up labor costs. The arbitrator looks at four criteria in making a decision: how wages, hours, and conditions of employment compare in similar communities; the interests and welfare of the public and the ability of the jurisdiction to pay; the hazards and other unique circumstances of the job; and, finally, previous contracts.

The first criterion is the real killer for municipal finances. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Nassau County Executive Thomas Gulotta agreed to a series of porcine police contracts in a largely successful effort to portray himself as a supporter of law and order. These settlements, however, became the benchmark for arbitrators in Suffolk County. "In every Police Benevolent Association economic proposal at issue," reads part of the 2000 Suffolk arbitration, "Suffolk County lags behind Nassau County."

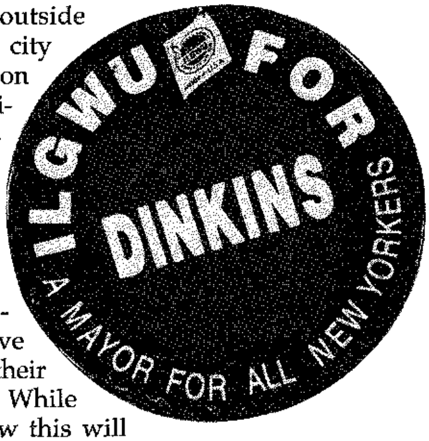
But the other criteria have pushed salaries up too. PERB arbitrators have interpreted the "interests and welfare" clause to mean: a well-paid police force serves the public best. You might think that requiring the arbitrator to consider the "ability of the jurisdiction to pay" would offer taxpayers some protection. But the arbitrator in the Suffolk case gave no hint that the county and its residents had schools, roads, parks, or anything else on which they might choose to spend money. The only consideration seemed to be the county's constitutional taxing limit. Suffolk, despite its high taxes, is nowhere close to that. Ergo, the county could "afford" the wage hike. The PERB has also interpreted the "previous contracts" criterion as a public-employee Brezhnev Doctrine: earlier gains are irreversible. Thus, contracts can go in only one direction: up and up.

This labor-friendly environment makes the negotiating process between governments and public-employee unions into a cruel joke on taxpayers: unions just hold out for arbitration, since they know it will go their way. So certain were Suffolk officials of the inevitability of Taylor Law arbitration in the police contract that they didn't even bother putting a wage offer on the table.

And the joke isn't just on taxpayers living in the Nassau and Suffolk police districts. The threat of binding arbitration means that town and village officers on Long Island almost always receive contracts that track those of the larger departments, imposing a heavy burden on local budgets. Indeed, some small jurisdictions actually feel compelled to offer pay and benefit packages in excess of those of ultra-plush county departments, in order to lure officers to work on their smaller forces.

Though Long Islanders get good police service, the exorbitant personnel costs take their toll. The high cost of putting one officer on the street, for example, means curtailed hiring. One-man patrol cars are the norm on Long Island. Foot patrols are rare. Combined with the high pay and benefits that encourage veteran officers to stay on the job as long as they legally can (until age 62), you get an aging force in what is a young person's job. Essential services, such as vehicle maintenance, slip. Ambulances, which in Nassau the police department operates, frequently break down.

For years, such settlements only hit areas outside Gotham, since the city had state permission to handle labor arbitration with cops through its own Office of Collective Bargaining. Recently, however, Gotham police won their long lobbying effort to have the PERB review their contracts instead. While no one knows how this will play out, the big, cushy contracts on Long Island may well factor in NYPD contract talks for the first time. And after all, despite having much more dangerous jobs, New York City police make far less than their counterparts on Long Island. They also work, on average, about 200 hours per year more than Nassau officers. And if the cops get higher pay, pattern bargaining will probably lead to big raises for the other municipal unions too.



The Taylor Law's PERB requirement is one of a host of centralized mandates that Nelson Rockefeller bequeathed to New York. Like all of these mandates, it has made a mockery of local control, disempowering the people on the spot, who should be figuring out how to spend limited resources on competing goods. Clearly something has to give, unless one believes that public-sector employees are entitled, now and forever, to higher wages than the people who pay their salaries.

—John A. Barnes

Why Penn Station Should Stay Put

The Feds' plan to relocate Penn to the stately Farley Post Office is a bad idea for commuters.

There's been a lot of celebratory hand-clapping over the federal government's multi-billion-dollar proposal to move New York's Pennsylvania Station from its current location under Madison Square Garden one block west to occupy the James A. Farley Post Office Building at 33rd Street. The plan, with New York senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's enthusiastic backing, seeks to construct a "world-class train station as befits the gateway to the great city of New York," as Deputy Postmaster General Mike Coughlin put it. And true, the old post office is a splendid building.

But wait. The move would make commuting a lot more aggravating for the 300,000 workers crowding into Manhattan every day from Long Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and even Washington, D.C.

Instead of keeping Penn Station in its current location between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, where it annexes two major West Side subway lines, the new location connects only to the Eighth Avenue line. Seventh Avenue line users will now have to trudge a block to get to the subway. In addition, commuters who now walk just one block from Penn Station to pick up trains at Herald Square will now have to hike two blocks. Imagine, too, the impact on local traffic as hundreds of thousands of train passengers take to the already-clogged streets around the new location on their way to the subway. Penn Station should just stay put, though it could certainly do with a makeover. Ask commuters whether they'd prefer an inconvenient grand station to greet their arrival or easy subway access, and their answer would be: easy access.

Moving Penn Station will cost a lot of money. Better to spend it on alleviating New York's pressing transportation problems rather than on aggravating them. New York's 600 miles of subway lines haven't extended their reach since the 1930s. The Metropolitan Transit Authority should build a Second Avenue subway line running from the Bronx through Manhattan to Brooklyn in order to make sure that existing transportation bottlenecks don't choke off New York's prosperity.

In addition, lack of subway access west of Eighth Avenue has stifled development on midtown's Hudson River side. And with existing subway lines, the new Hudson River Park, scheduled to open in 2005 and run from Battery Park along the shoreline to West 59th Street, will be hard to reach. The MTA should extend the Number 7 train, which has linked Flushing, Queens, to Times Square since 1920, to Manhattan's west shore. Not only would this give New Yorkers access to the new park and help businesses take root and grow in the area; it would also effectively link Grand Central Station and Penn Station and spark life into the costly and underutilized Javits Center.

—Peter Reinharz

Falling Dominoes

One by one, former voucher opponents are becoming supporters.

It looks like vouchers are an idea whose time has come. The teachers'-union-dominated Democratic Party has until recently steadfastly opposed legislation that would provide private school vouchers for poor kids trapped in failing public schools. But now there are powerful signs that the party's opposition may be weakening, even at the very top. True, Vice President Al Gore hasn't endorsed vouchers. But by selecting voucher sympathizer Joe Lieberman as his running mate in the 2000 presidential race, he makes it harder for defenders of the status quo to taint pro-voucher forces as part of a "vast right-wing conspiracy" out to destroy the nation's public schools.

Almost every week, another Democratic domino falls, bringing new defectors to the voucher camp, including former congressman and UN ambassador Andrew Young and Columbia Teachers College president Arthur Levine. Even progressive-ed guru Howard Gardner recently admitted in the *New York Review of Books* that American education is moving irresistibly toward a mixed system of vouchers, charter schools, and traditional public schools.

Another tumbling domino is *The New Republic.* Having promoted Al Gore's presidential candidacy for the better part of two decades, the liberal weekly broke with the vice president on vouchers just after the Democratic convention. "The presidential candidate is wrong and the vice presidential candidate is right" on vouchers, the magazine's editorialist intoned. "We do not fully know whether vouchers will work. But the Democratic Party must no longer be afraid to find out."

And now Robert Reich, Bill Clinton's first secretary of labor and a champion of the party's populist wing, joins the list. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Reich proposed combining vouchers for poor inner-city students with equalization of education spending between the suburbs and the city. Reich didn't say so, but this is close to what Republican Lisa Graham Keegan is doing in Arizona as the state's education boss (see "What Is Public Education?" on page 36). Finally, the *New York Times* recently picked up the language *City Journal* has been using for three years and speaks on Page One of vouchers as a civil rights battle.

A George W. Bush administration (with Keegan, say, as education secretary) would mean enthusiastic White House sponsorship of some form of voucher legislation. But even if Gore wins, vouchers could gain ground. Suppose the congress again passes a means-tested voucher bill for kids stuck in Washington, D.C.'s horrendous public schools. With prominent Democrat defectors, overwhelming urban minority support for vouchers, and with Lieberman making a case for letting a D.C. experiment go forward, there's a decent chance that Gore would sign such a limited bill—if not out of conviction, then to continue the Clinton administration's tradition of co-opting popular Republican issues.

And what would the powerful teachers' unions do about their candidate's political betrayal? The same thing the liberal constituencies that helped elect Bill Clinton did when he signed welfare-reform legislation: grumble and adjust.

—Sol Stern

Lingua Franca

It's past time for New York to scrap bilingual ed.

In June 1998, Californians overwhelmingly approved Proposition 227, the controversial ballot initiative that replaced the state's bilingual-ed system with English-immersion classes. No more would California's public schools force non-English-speaking immigrant kids to take their courses in their native tongue, guaranteeing that few would ever gain the proficiency in English they need to get ahead in America. Despite resistance from some local school districts and bilingual-ed advocates, nearly a million immigrant students, most of them Hispanic, transferred into the new English-immersion system.

The results are in, and they're striking: in just two years, the standardized test scores of immigrant students rocketed up 40 percent. The Oceanside Unified District that followed Proposition 227 to the letter saw its second-grade immigrant scores go from the 21st to the 47th percentile, meaning that the children of poor, often illiterate, Spanish-speaking farmworkers have nearly reached the national average for suburban white kids from middle-class, English-speaking families. In stark contrast, neighboring Vista Unified, a district of similar size and demography that stubbornly kept most of its kids in bilingual classes, watched most immigrant scores fall this past year.

THE BEST NEWS SINCE LA GUARDIA
LINDSAY FOR MAYOR

English immersion's dramatic California success has broken through the silence and misinformation that has long surrounded America's disastrous 30-year bilingual-ed experiment. Newspapers from coast to coast, including the *New York Times*, trumpeted the results; television networks showed Hispanic children who didn't speak a word of English at the school year's start now reading, writing, and speaking English fluently after just nine months' immersion. Now Arizona stands poised to abolish its segregated bilingual classes in a statewide ballot initiative this November.

Will this wave of English instruction reach New York City, where 150,000 immigrant kids remain imprisoned in bilingual ed? Indications are that the New York press would now fully support a shift to English immersion. More important, doing away with the bilingual-ed system resonates with the vast majority of New Yorkers, many of whom are just a couple of generations removed from the old country. Several recent Zogby polls have found that between 75 percent and 80 percent of New York residents support a requirement that public school teaching be entirely in English. The support crosses ethnic and ideological lines, so it's a political no-brainer.

Unfortunately, New York City schools currently operate under a 1974 consent decree that forces all Spanish-speaking public school kids to receive their instruction in Spanish. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani should go to court to get this order lifted. The gift of English to his Hispanic constituents' children would be a truly lasting legacy.

—*Ron Unz*

Defending the Indefensible

The ACLU goes haywire over Man/Boy Love.

On its website, the Massachusetts branch of the American Civil Liberties Union posts a list of Frequently Asked Questions. The most revealing is the briefest:

Q: The ACLU is opposed to censorship, but aren't there limits to what can be published?

A: The ACLU believes that under our Constitution's First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of speech, adults should have the right to read and watch and listen to whatever they choose. The organization is opposed to restraints on what can be published or distributed to adults. Attempts to do so are usually an effort by vocal, well-organized groups to impose their own values on all Americans.

The operative word here is "adults." Nowhere on the site does the ACLU advocate the distribution of obscene or sexually seductive literature that might affect children. But this literature can affect children—harm children—even if they aren't the ones who are reading it. That will be the case as the organization prepares to defend the indefensible: the pedophiles of the North American Man/Boy Love Association. It's the equivalent of the ACLU defending the right to shout "fire" in a crowded theater.

The parents of Jeffrey Curley, a Cambridge ten-year-old kidnapped and tortured to death by two neighbors, hit NAMBLA with a lawsuit, after it turned out that one of the murderers belonged to the organization. The Curleys hold that NAMBLA's notorious advocacy of sex between the mature and the immature excited and encouraged the murderer. They have a point. A Boston library computer showed that one of the killers had logged onto the NAMBLA website just hours before the killing.

Of course, NAMBLA doesn't call for the murder of the young. It does, however, support the maiming of their psyches. A U.S. Department of Justice report on child sexual exploitation notes what all abused children learn. Those who are the targets of "chicken hawks" (child molesters) "have been carefully seduced and often do not realize they are victims." Only later do they find "that all the attention, affection and gifts were just part of a master plan to use and exploit them." And Steven M. Mirin, medical director for the American Psychiatric Association, points out that from "a psychological perspective, sex between adults and children is always abusive and exploitative because the adult always holds the power in the relationship and the child does not."

In favor of this exploitation, NAMBLA officially supports "the rights of all people to engage in consensual relations, and we oppose laws which destroy loving relationships merely on the basis of the age of the participants." Shorn of euphemism, the statement means: society should permit men to copulate with boys. Because civilized countries define childhood as the time before the age of consent, the fact that a child may say yes to a predator is irrelevant. The courts have a word for the "relations" NAMBLA advocates: rape.

This is an era of same-sex "marriages" and public campaigns against the Boy Scouts of America for barring homosexuals from being scoutmasters. The unthinkable is no longer unthinkable. Perhaps one day NAMBLA will get its wish, and predatory adults will be able legally to have their way with the young. If they do, it will be in part because canny lawyers allowed them to hide their advocacy of sex crimes behind the First Amendment.

The ACLU makes much of its successful defense of the American Nazi Party's right to march in Skokie, Illinois, a pyrrhic victory (the Nazis never marched, and the ACLU lost many members and financial contributors). The organization often invokes this and other celebrated cases to show that, whatever the cost, it defends those who cannot effectively defend themselves. In standing behind NAMBLA, the ACLU claims to be doing the same thing. It overlooks two salient facts:

First, the Founders were not a bunch of permissive gulls. They did not endorse any and all behavior and speech, no matter how troubled or violent. Thus they set limits and enacted laws. To them, as to any rational thinker today, the sacred First Amendment is a guarantee of responsible liberty, not a license for sociopaths. Second, the most defenseless individuals in this or any other nation are children. Any adult, no matter how warped or mentally ill, is more powerful than any child. Evidently, the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts means to keep kids defenseless.

—Stefan Kanfer

Some Alternative

The New York Regents' new alternative-certification program won't give New York more teachers or improve teacher quality.

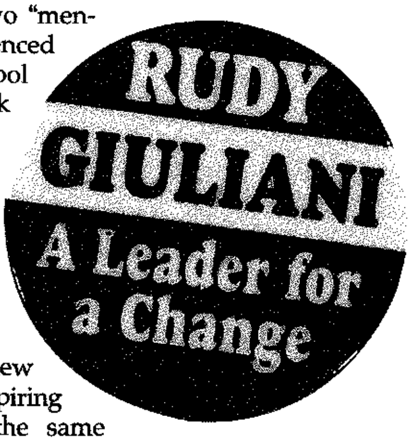
Faced with a teacher shortage in public schools, states such as New Jersey and Massachusetts have recognized that there are a lot of smart, talented people out there who'd love to teach but don't want to go to ed school and get a teaching license, thinking it a waste of time or money. So these states created alternative routes that made it much easier to get a license, provided that you know your subjects well. The New York State Board of Regents' new alternative-certification program purports to do the same thing. It doesn't.

In fact, the Regents' program keeps in place almost all the dysfunctional elements of ed-school teacher training that drive bright and talented people away from the profession. Perhaps the biggest problem is that the ed schools themselves will administer the program instead of the school districts or state agencies that usually have the responsibility in other states.

Unsurprisingly, given who is running the show, the new program is mostly just a watered-down version of the usual certification process. First, prospective teachers will still have to take 18 to 24 hours of ed-school courses. Though some of this coursework is useful—learning how to discipline a rowdy classroom, say, or how to evaluate student performance—much of it focuses on such trendy nonsense as "child-centered" or "constructivist" teaching methods that do nothing to improve teacher quality and probably make student performance worse. The exact breakdown of useful and nonsensical coursework is impossible to know from available information.

Second, program participants, like all public school teachers, will have to get a master's degree within their first four years on the job. But this makes little sense. If a master's is a job requirement, why presume teachers are qualified to teach before they obtain one? If a master's isn't necessary to good teaching, why require it? Given that many teachers get their M.A.'s in education, could this turn out to be just a way of filling up ed-school classes?

Third, as with the traditional teacher-training program, prospective teachers on the alternative path must have two "mentors": an experienced teacher in the school they'll actually work in, which makes sense, but also an ed-school instructor, which doesn't and just makes the certification process unnecessarily cumbersome.



Finally, the new program requires aspiring teachers to take the same tests—one in the liberal arts and sciences and the other in a specialized area—that all new teachers take. They must also take a third test, assessing their teaching skills, within four years of starting to teach. This might mean more if the tests were serious. But they aren't. At most New York ed schools, 95 percent or more of students pass the liberal arts and teaching-skills tests, and about nine out of ten pass the content tests. Exam-preparation materials suggest that those taking New York's liberal arts and sciences test can answer some questions just by reading them carefully. Teachers can also retake these tests as many as five times, which isn't very reassuring.

The new program isn't all bad. It makes it easier for non-traditional candidates—career changers and recent college grads with a degree in the subject they'd like to teach but no ed-school training—to get certified. It also includes recent salutary Regents' reforms of traditional teacher training, like requiring new teachers to pass content exams before they begin teaching, rather than within five years after they start, as had been the case until recently. But to argue, as Teachers College president Arthur Levine argues, that the new program shakes up "the monopoly on training teachers" is simply wrong.

To ease the teacher shortage and get better teachers into the classroom, the Regents should do away with most requirements for teachers' licenses (with the important exception of making sure that teachers know their subject matter inside and out) and should put in place a system for measuring schools' academic performance. Aside from oversight, the state should hand over to school principals the authority to recruit and reward well-qualified people from all fields and to fire teachers who don't measure up.

If the Regents took this course, New Yorkers would solve its teacher-shortage problem—and have better teachers, too.

—Candace deRussy

Elementary Con Job

The latest literary lion's answer to the nihilism of the sixties: *Vive le nihilisme!*

In la belle France, the puerilities of Jerry Lewis are seen as Chaplinesque, the Stalinism of Jean-Paul Sartre sagacious, and the maunderings of Jacques Derrida profound. So it should come as no surprise that its current literary celebrity, Michel Houellebecq, has achieved pantheon status with his new work, *The Elementary Particles*: "The great novel of the end of the millennium," cries French *Elle*; "Here are ideas, here are dreams, here is a great novel," enthuses *Le Monde*.

In fact, the ideas are banal, the dreams pornographic, and the novel a rehash of high school science and pulp plotting. Nevertheless, Monsieur Houellebecq must be congratulated for one achievement: he is a con artist nonpareil, a poseur whose pseudo-attacks on nihilism are actually an endorsement of it. The *New York Times* is his latest conquest; it calls *The Elementary Particles* "an attack on everything the 60s generation holds dear."

If this is an attack, one wonders what a bouquet looks like. Houellebecq quite rightly states that the sixties mantra—free love, unrestricted dope use, rejection of the family, and an overturning of traditional values—led to nihilism. But after clucking about it, the author simply brings the mantra up-to-date with a book-length graffito: *Vive le nihilisme*!

In essence, the tale concerns the adventures of Michel and Bruno, half-brothers whose drop-out parents abandoned them early on. Bruno becomes a wanderer obsessed with, but not very good at, sex; Michel is an intellectual biologist who develops a method of cloning humans that are not quite human. Long after his suicide, this new species takes over the earth. Masturbation, drugs, and sadism dominate the narrative. ("The cat looked over at me from time to time while I was whacking off, but closed its eyes just before I came. I bent down and picked up a rock. The cat's skull shattered and some of its brains spurted out.") En route, Houellebecq puts down Aldous Huxley, but manifestly hopes to compare favorably with him. His novel is a restatement of *Brave New World*, without that book's originality, comic sense, or moral overview.

The saddest part of *The Elementary Particles* is not merely its author's lack of talent but the enthusiastic reception the book has received. In a recent profile, Emily Eakin, a reporter for the *New York Times Magazine* journeyed to Dublin, where the writer now lives. She commented sympathetically on his isolation and on how the artist seeks to lose himself in alcoholism and group sex. Indeed, had Houellebecq not made the mistake of hitting on Eakin, he might have emerged a tragic hero instead of a merely flawed one.

But he needn't worry: with Europe now comparing him to Albert Camus and Françoise Sagan, sales in America should be brisk. As one of France's truly wise men, Marcel Proust, observed: "*L'inexactitude, l'incompétence, ne diminuent pas l'assurance. Au contraire*" (Inexactitude and incompetence do not diminish assurance. Quite the contrary).

—Stefan Kanfer

A New Lincoln Center

Let's tear down the crumbling structures and start over. Here are plans by architects **Quinlan Terry, Robert Adam,** and the firm of **Franck Lohsen McCrery**.

Myron Magnet

It's time to start thinking hard about tearing down Lincoln Center and building up a new, much better one—an architectural masterpiece that will signal New York City's miraculous recovery over the last decade and its renewed confidence that it will be the capital of the twenty-first century as it has been of the twentieth. To start that rethinking, this issue of *City Journal* offers plans by leading architects of what a new Lincoln Center could look like. The dramatic differences among the schemes, all of which are classical but each of which envisions the arts complex in a new and original light, suggest what a range of possibilities for improvement exists. Any one of the three would be splendid, a major enhancement to the city in many ways.

A pipe dream, you say? Consider this: Lincoln Center is in terrible physical condition, requiring, according to its management, $1.5 billion—yes, *billion*—to repair it. Its travertine marble facing is melting away like sugar in Gotham's polluted air; its flimsy modernist architectural construction needs major restoration, in a hurry. That $1.5 billion would go very far toward paying for a completely new complex of buildings. And were it spent to restore the current complex to its original condition, the same underlying structural problems would almost certainly require another gargantuanly expensive restoration only three or four decades in the future. So every future generation will have to pay for Lincoln Center all over again.

Lincoln Center today

If Lincoln Center were an architectural treasure—even if it were only acoustically and technically a superb machine for presenting the performing arts—the huge cost would make sense. But tearing it down is no desecration. From the time the building first went up, architectural critics have dismissed it as mediocre, and music critics have rated its sound as nothing special, even after Avery Fisher Hall's endless and expensive acoustical remodelings and the New York State Theater's current, desperate experiment with electronic amplification, to the derision of opera lovers.

In fairness, Lincoln Center *is* a triumph of city planning, its symmetrical layout and formal, fountain-adorned plaza an embodiment of the City Beautiful urban vision advocated by such turn-of-the-last-century architects as McKim, Mead, and White and Richard Morris Hunt and realized most fully in the 1892 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. New Yorkers like the plaza; even if they deprecate the individual buildings, they take pleasure in the formal, ceremonious, celebratory public space the ensemble forms.

It's a city-planning success in a more down-to-earth way, as well. Parks Commissioner and Gotham planning czar Robert Moses first envisioned the Center in the mid-1950s as a lever to uplift the entire Upper West Side of Manhattan, then in deep decline. New York had first permitted single-room-occupancy residences in 1939; 15 years later, an influx of the poor living in such SROs and in rent-controlled apartments, including thousands of new immigrants from Puerto Rico, made observers fear that the Upper West Side was fast decaying into a permanent slum, dirty, crime-ridden, and fear-inspiring. Time has proven Moses right: the building of Lincoln Center, creating a real sense of place with its graciously proportioned

Classicism's infinite capacity for renewal: the Parthenon (438 B.C.) and Palladio's Villa Rotunda (1570)

outdoor room, was the first in a series of events that led to an emphatically revivified section of the city, with businesses flourishing and property values skyrocketing in a wide swath around the complex and stretching many blocks to its north. As then-Center president John D. Rockefeller III put it, the complex was intended as "a new kind of city therapy."

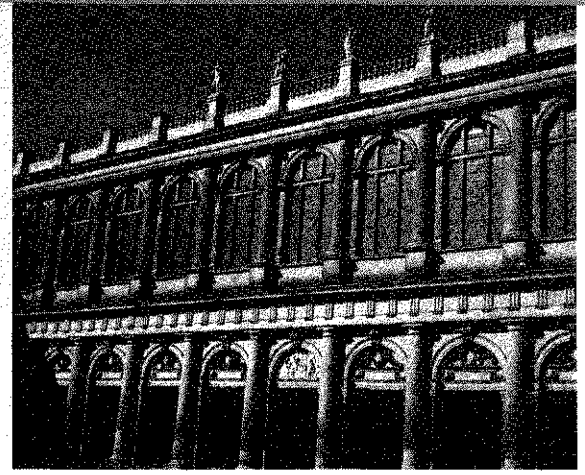
But as architecture, oh dear. The Center was deplorable, as critics recognized from the start. Despite the mountain of money lavished on it, despite the vast expanses of travertine, despite its almost endearing anxiety to look monumental, it looked cheap and cheesy. Philip Johnson's New York State Theater presented to Columbus Avenue—the ceremonial front of Lincoln Center—a blank wall, as if, having run out of ideas after he'd finished with the front, he had tacked up travertine like sheetrock around the rest of the building. Inside, while tiers of galleries rising above the atrium lobby turned the audience itself into a festive spectacle during intermission, critics complained from the start that the galleries looked like a maximum-security prison in their metallic angularity, especially since the whole soaring space culminated in an unadorned ceiling that again seemed testimony to architect Johnson's mental exhaustion.

Max Abramovitz's Philharmonic Hall, renamed Avery Fisher Hall after the hi-fi magnate gave $10 million toward the gutting of the acoustically challenged structure and reconfiguring it so that it sounded adequate and the musicians could hear one another, gives the concertgoer the sensation of being in an extremely upscale shopping mall, all its adornments failing to disguise the plain concrete box it really is. Its low-ceilinged lobby and workaday escalators create a sense of placelessness that makes you wonder as you ascend if you will emerge into a food court dominated by Wendy's and Domino's Pizza. But no: instead you emerge into a space dominated by Richard Lippold's appalling "sculpture," composed of giant copper and zinc alloy blades suspended from wires like the sword of Damocles and looking like a tort suit waiting to happen.

As for Wallace Harrison's Metropolitan Opera House, architecture critics couldn't resist the comparison with Miami Beach hotels, and they observed that two giant blank walls almost right up against the glass facade necessitated the huge Calder murals to cover them, like colossal "Hallmark Chanukah cards," as Lincoln Kirstein dismissed them with Olympian asperity. At least the design as built was better than an earlier version, in which the five great arches on the facade resembled the toes of a giant foot.

Most critics, as the individual buildings opened between 1962 and 1969, charged that they failed because they weren't modernist enough. In fact, the reverse was the case: they were insufficiently traditional. As it was, the architects of the three principal buildings fell between two stools. As they attempted to cling to their modernist principles while at the same time making a nod toward the tradition of classical architecture, they created a kind of proto-postmodernism: modernist buildings with some traditionalist doodads tacked on. Lacking postmodernism's smart-aleck "irony," though, these buildings really are nothing but kitsch—sentimental and insincere evocations of something meaningful, without any understanding of, or passion for, the underlying ideal. So perhaps the best critic of the complex was Lyndon Johnson's wife, Lady Bird, who at the Opera House's opening gushed: "Ah have an impression of red; Ah have an impression of gold; Ah have an impression of chandeliers." Crude impressions of bygone ele-

Michelangelo's Campidoglio (1538)



Christopher Wren's Trinity College Library (1684)

McKim, Mead & White's Pennsylvania Station (1910)

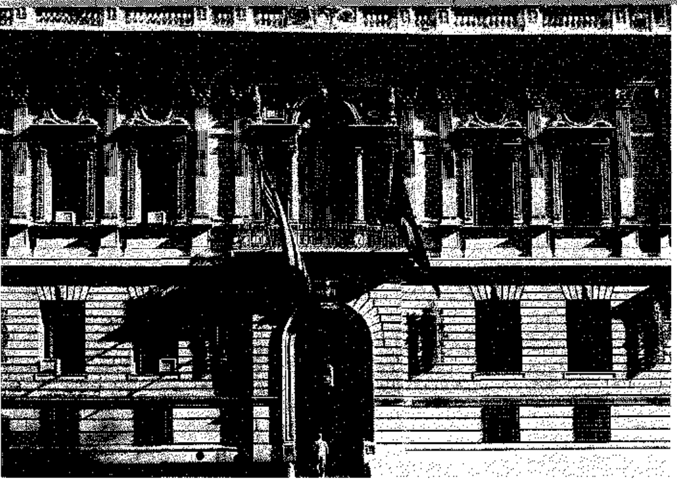
gance, shreds and patches of tradition, is what Lincoln Center's architecture is all about.

The instinct of these architects to make at least a gesture toward classicism was understandable. As the managers of the Metropolitan Opera correctly perceived, classical architecture was the appropriate style for the entire complex—real classical, not stagey pastiche. Lincoln Center was to be an acropolis for New York; in a secular city, it was to be a shrine for the arts, a testament to man's capacity to imagine and represent an ideal world of beauty and harmony, of self-discipline in the service of an ideal, of the communal celebration of man's spiritual nature and noblest aspirations. To use for this purpose the architecture that the Greeks invented to build temples makes perfect sense. Lincoln Center, moreover, was to be a living museum of our cultural and artistic inheritance, where we prove every day that the masterworks of our ancestors—of Handel and Mozart, Verdi and Wagner—speak to us just as movingly and meaningfully as to their contemporaries of the human spirit, its yearnings and ideals. Why not, then, clothe it in the architecture we inherit from Palladio and Michelangelo, from Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren—another living tradition? Finally, what could be more suitable than the architecture of democratic Greece and republican Rome for a project that, like such great New York public spaces as Central Park and Grand Central Station, was to be a gathering place for all New Yorkers?

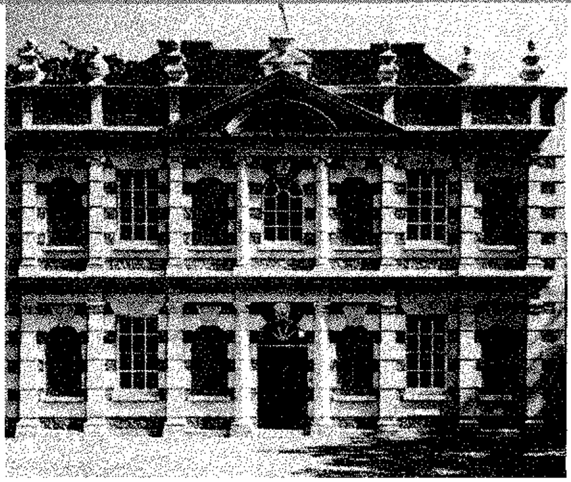
Understandably, the men of the late fifties and early sixties would have found it hard to take this course. Modernism wasn't just architecture's prevailing orthodoxy but indeed its sole dogma. Established architects of the era spoke with reverential familiarity of "Corbu" and affected his little round glasses. They believed that modernism was the only possible style that spoke to the present and the future. To us, half a century later, modernism is beginning to look tired and dated. The boring grid-wrapped boxes that fill our cities are so alike and uninspired—just look at the *New York Times*'s recently published photos of proposals for its new office building—that it's hard for us to understand why modernism's champions defended this style as original. Today, too, as the hierarchical corporations that built their headquarters in this style have flattened and decentralized their management structures, the modernist grid that expressed that structure looks as dated as Charles Bluhdorn's Gulf and Western or Hal Geneen's ITT. To us today, the modernist grid speaks not only of soul-deadening, anti-individualist technocratic bureaucracy but of something much more sinister—of the totalitarianism of the central planner, who sees the Big Picture into which the mass of mere individuals must fit for their own good, whether they like it or not.

Today we are quite unembarrassed about finding the Beaux Arts skyscrapers of lower Manhattan inspirational, with their wealth of classical details and sophisticated traditional vocabulary—infinitely preferable to the dull mechanical boxes that the last 50 years have crowded into the city. If given the choice, most of us would prefer the classical limestone buildings that lined Park Avenue in midtown at mid-century to the glass and steel structures that replaced them, and we'd take the Flatiron Building, with all its lively humanity, over even the best of the modernist creations, Mies van der Rohe's chilly Seagram Building, with its doctrinaire uniformity of light fixtures and window blinds. Today's New Yorkers love the restored Grand Central Station and Public Library reading room and the grand new Greek galleries in the even grander Metropolitan Museum. This classicism is the architecture of Gotham at its pinnacle of twentieth-century greatness; it is the fitting style for New York's moment of twenty-first-century greatness, as well.

This is an extraordinary epoch in the city's history. A degree of public order and civility and safe-



Stanford White's Century Association (1891)



Contributor Quinlan Terry's Fawley House (1989)

ty reigns that longtime New Yorkers thought we'd never see again. Businesses both small and large are flourishing. New Yorkers have created vast amounts of wealth by financing the corporate restructuring that has retained American industrial supremacy and by establishing Internet businesses that hold out the promise of future prosperity. A restored and reclaimed Bryant Park and Central Park are indices of the city's recovery, both civic and economic. And so great is the turnaround that our own turn-of-the-millennium tycoons are moving back into the mansions that the Gilded-Age magnates built but that only institutions have been able to use for most of a century.

Even so, New Yorkers have the sense that we can never really equal the extraordinary inheritance we have received from our Gilded-Age forebears. As we glide up the Metropolitan Museum's grand staircase, we can't help thinking that we could never again build something as magnificent. We could never replace Penn Station, which our own era barbarously destroyed, along with the many other ingenious lovely things that are gone.

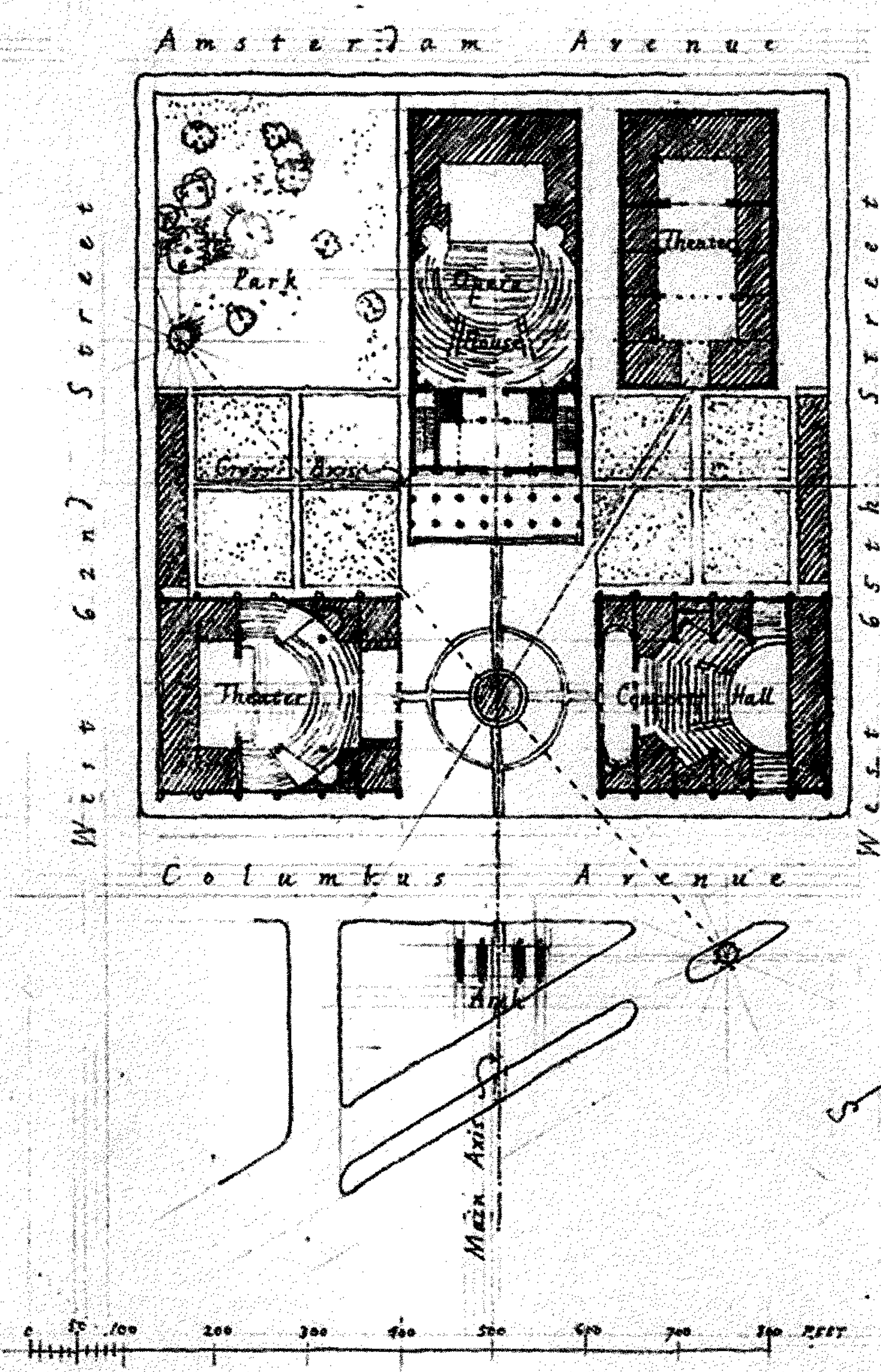
But why not? We have the wealth. The grand classical style belongs to us and is our city's defining idiom. We have shown, in Kevin Roche's excellent but little-heralded 1993 addition to the Jewish Museum, that we have the technical skill to build as beautifully in stone as our ancestors built. So why not build a monument like those sketched out in the plans that follow, financed by our modern Medicis? Why not build a Lincoln Center that will last for centuries and testify that we knew how to conceive a city and build it as splendidly as any great urban civilization did?

To build this way is not an exercise in Disneyland nostalgia, as the champions of modernism and postmodernism would charge. One of the astonishing qualities of the classical idiom is how it lends itself to continual renewal and reinvention. No one could say that Stanford White or Charles Follen McKim or Edwin Lutyens were not both of their time and original, even while they took their places in the great tradition that Vitruvius first codified in Roman times. Who would mistake the Century Club or the buildings of Columbia University as belonging to any other era than around the turn of the twentieth century, for all their correct and utterly confident classicism?

So too with the plans that follow. Each one interprets classicism in its own twenty-first-century way. Each conceives of the urban space in a different way, with Quinlan Terry hinging the Center organically to the grid of the city by means of a triumphal arch and a tempietto, and Robert Adam similarly enlarging the Center's space by creating a Lincoln Square where none now exists and, in the process, making some sense out of the confusion of the crossing of Columbus Avenue and Broadway. Each one of these schemes is designed to last; each one declares that New York confidently takes its unique and original place in the great procession of Western civilization.

To suggest such a course is naturally to invite others to come forth with their ideas, too. Such a vision of possibility is bound to fire many fertile imaginations. Some will come to the defense of the existing complex: it's hard not to feel affection for a place where we've all spent so many happy and uplifting hours over more than three decades. Almost certainly, the *New York Times*'s Herbert Muschamp will come forward to suggest a postmodernist scheme: one of Frank Gehry's giant titanium coprolites, say, or some slick pastiche by Christian de Portzamparc, whose one or two classical details—stage-set simulacra, really—always make you wonder why the property owner couldn't afford the real thing. These will look dated as soon as built, however.

Why not build instead something that real New Yorkers, not just the elites, will love, and that will show our posterity—and us, too—that we can build for the ages?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Grass Plots
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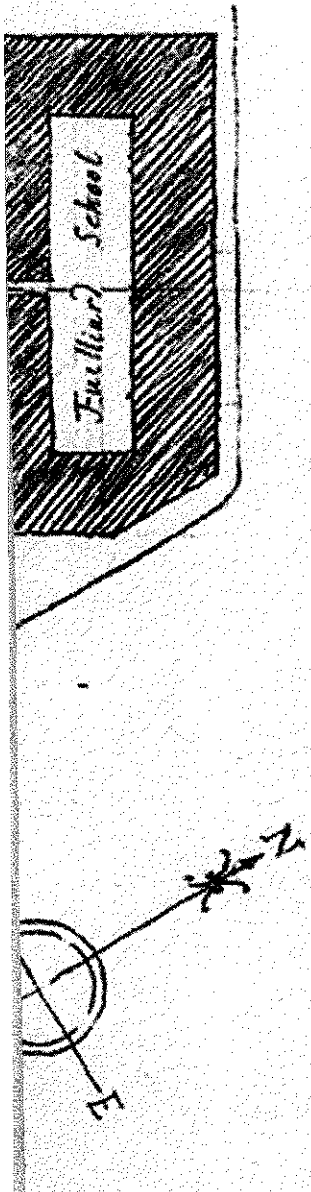
Quinlan Terry



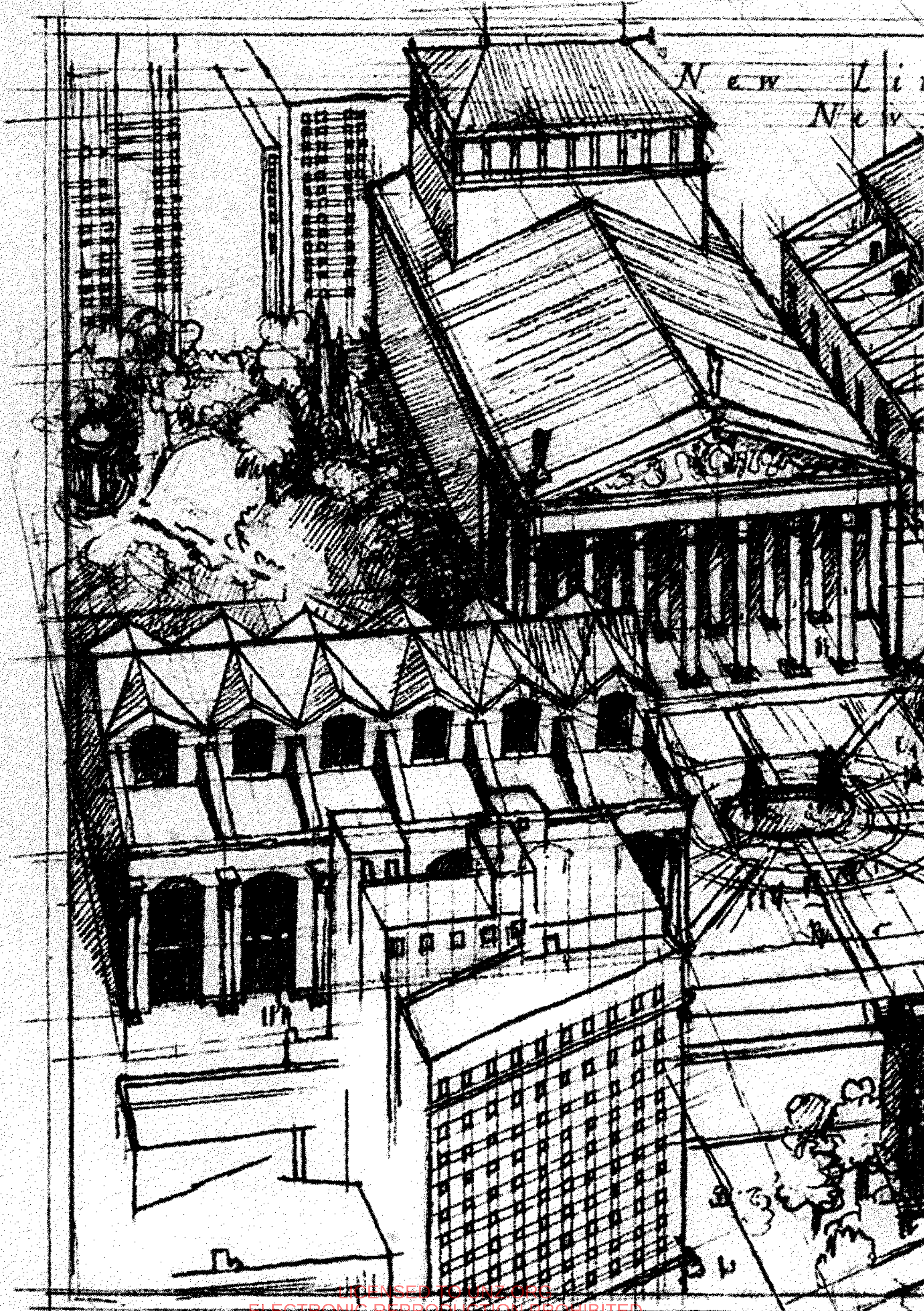
This proposal for the redevelopment of New York's Lincoln Center is for a group of new buildings in the great American Renaissance classical tradition. The buildings would be in Indiana limestone in load-bearing masonry and therefore built to last for many generations. This is in contrast to the buildings currently occupying the site, which are already suffering from the familiar problems associated with frame construction.

The new principal buildings of the Lincoln Center are grouped around a new public square in a similar position to the existing plaza. The square is approached along an axis from Central Park through a new triumphal arch announcing the main entrance. To the left and right are the new Theater and Concert Hall; these are based on Roman basilica and both buildings with their expansive vaulted interiors. Facing the square directly is the new Opera House, based on a Roman temple with a grand Corinthian portico. A cross-axis passes through this portico and leads to gardens to the north and south.

The arrangement of the site sets up a variety of views of the different buildings, in the tradition of Picturesque planning. Two circular temples are placed at opposite sides of the site, linked by a visual axis running diagonally across the main square. These temples are intended for a wide range of outdoor performances. The remaining buildings are a theater and new premises for the Juilliard School, built around a courtyard.

The proposals would add to the collection of great classical buildings in New York which includes City Hall, the Metropolitan Museum, and Grand Central Station. This would therefore be a powerful display of twenty-first century classicism, a statement of defiance against the construction of flimsy and ephemeral modern buildings. In this way the new Lincoln Center would represent a rich investment for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Erith & Terry, Archts. Dedham, Essex, England.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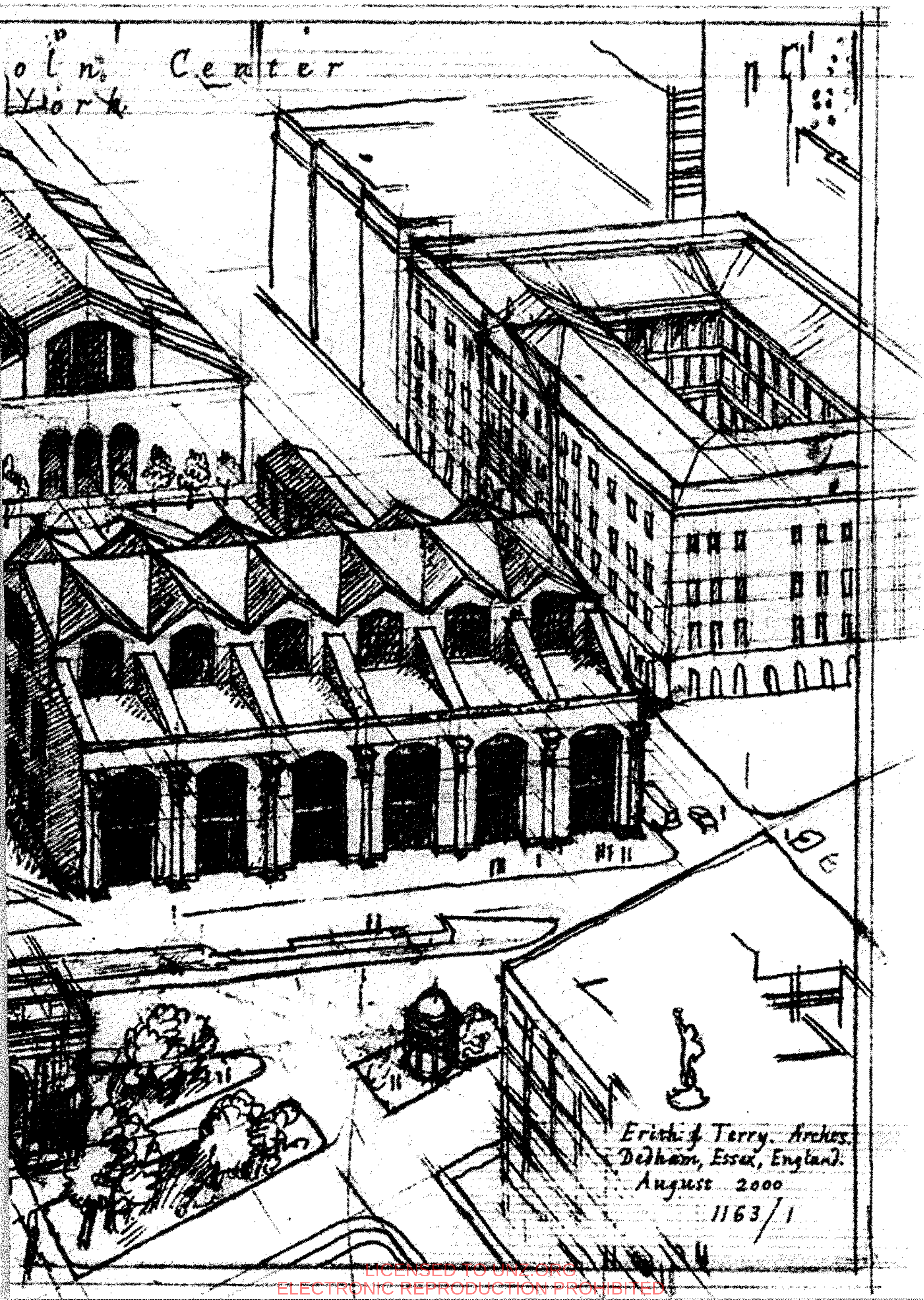
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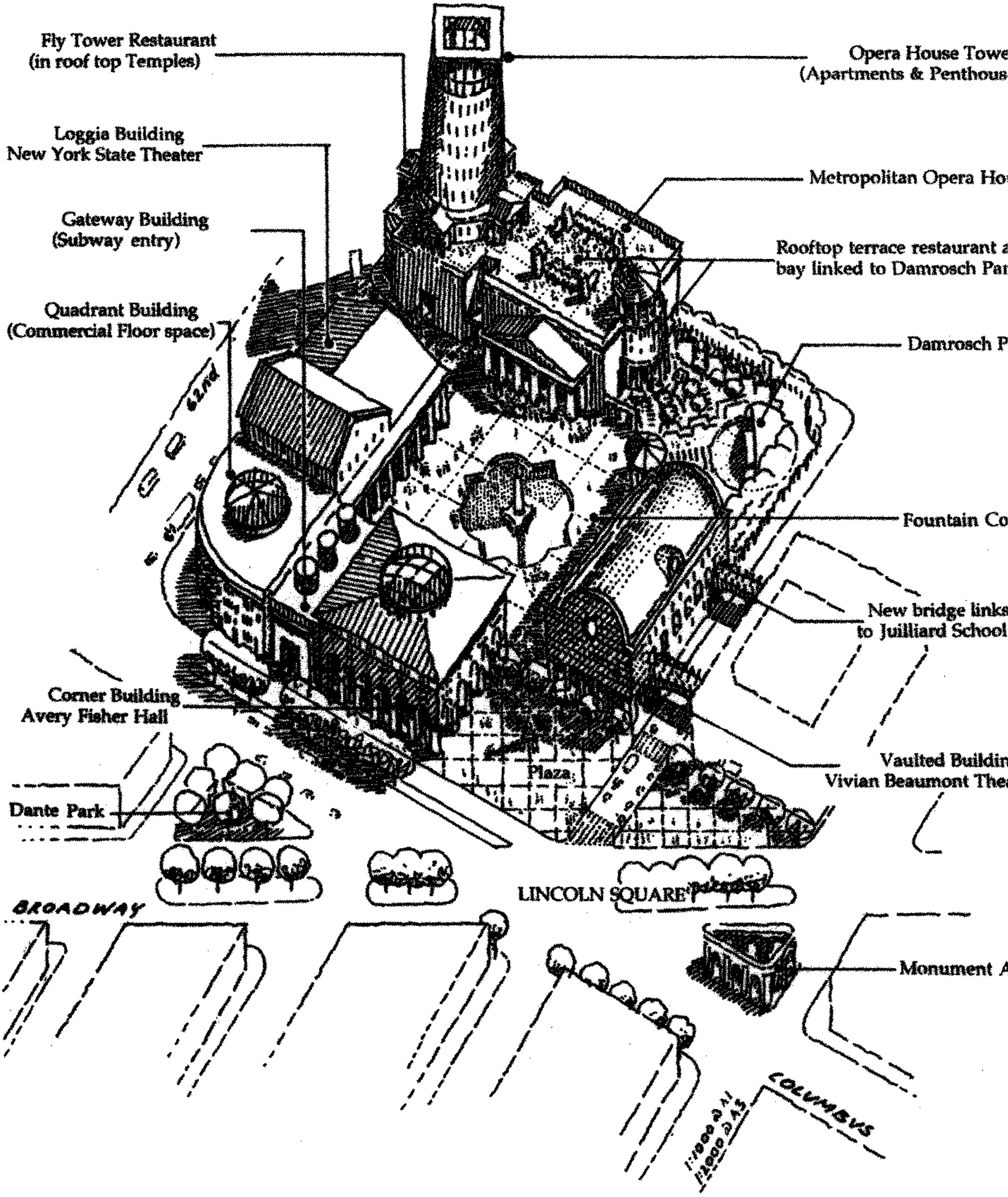
Fly Tower Restaurant
(in roof top Temples)
Loggia Building
New York State Theater
Gateway Building
(Subway entry)
Quadrant Building
(Commercial Floor space)
62nd
Corner Building
Avery Fisher Hall
Dante Park
BROADWAY
Opera House Towe
(Apartments & Penthous
Metropolitan Opera Ho
Rooftop terrace restaurant a
bay linked to Damrosch Par
Damrosch P
Fountain Co
New bridge links
to Juilliard School
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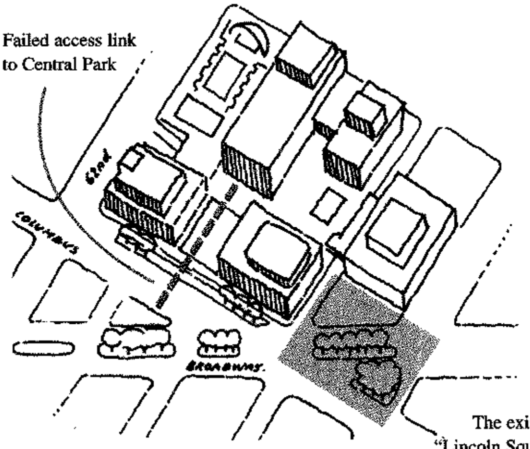

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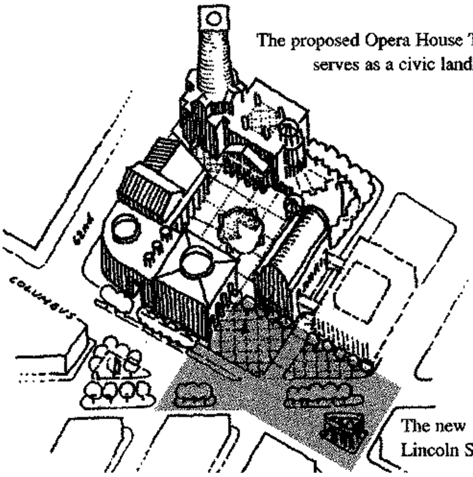
The existing "Lincoln Square"



The proposed Opera House Tower serves as a civic landmark.

The new Lincoln Square

Robert Adam

Lincoln Center is a curiosity. It is as if modernism lost its nerve and, bankrupt of any vocabulary for civic building, turned to crude classical planning and the distorted vestiges of columnar arcades. Now, even its concrete structure has let it down. There is no credibility left. New York deserves better.

The cartoon version of Michelangelo's Piazza di Campidoglio, with the inevitable fountain in place of Marcus Aurelius, has none of the subtlety of the hilltop original, with its trapezoidal space and elliptical paving. The entrance plaza sits up and apart from Broadway and creates a barren precinct that ignores the possibilities of one of the few avenue intersections of Broadway that elsewhere create such great spaces as Union Square or Madison Square. The block-wide avenue to Central Park that was proposed in the 1950s failed, and now the whole complex is a monument to the bankrupt dreams of ordered modernity that seemed to offer so much in the years after World War II.

With a new start, something more than a cultural ghetto can be handed back to the city.

Why enter the complex from the center of the block? Other than the lonely triangle of Dante Park, there is no logic, except for a misunderstanding of axial planning. Lincoln Square, another lonely triangle, is at least closer to the 66th Street subway station. If we were to combine it with the bare space in front of the Juilliard School, and with a new plaza at grade on the southwest corner of Columbus Avenue and 65th Street, we would create a significant new urban space.

An expanded Lincoln Square could give a more public face to the Vivian Beaumont Theater and Avery Fisher Hall. The design of these buildings, individual and imposing, would add to the sum of the new space and give an identity barely offered by the blank face of the Juilliard School or assisted by the cold commercial buildings across Columbus Avenue.

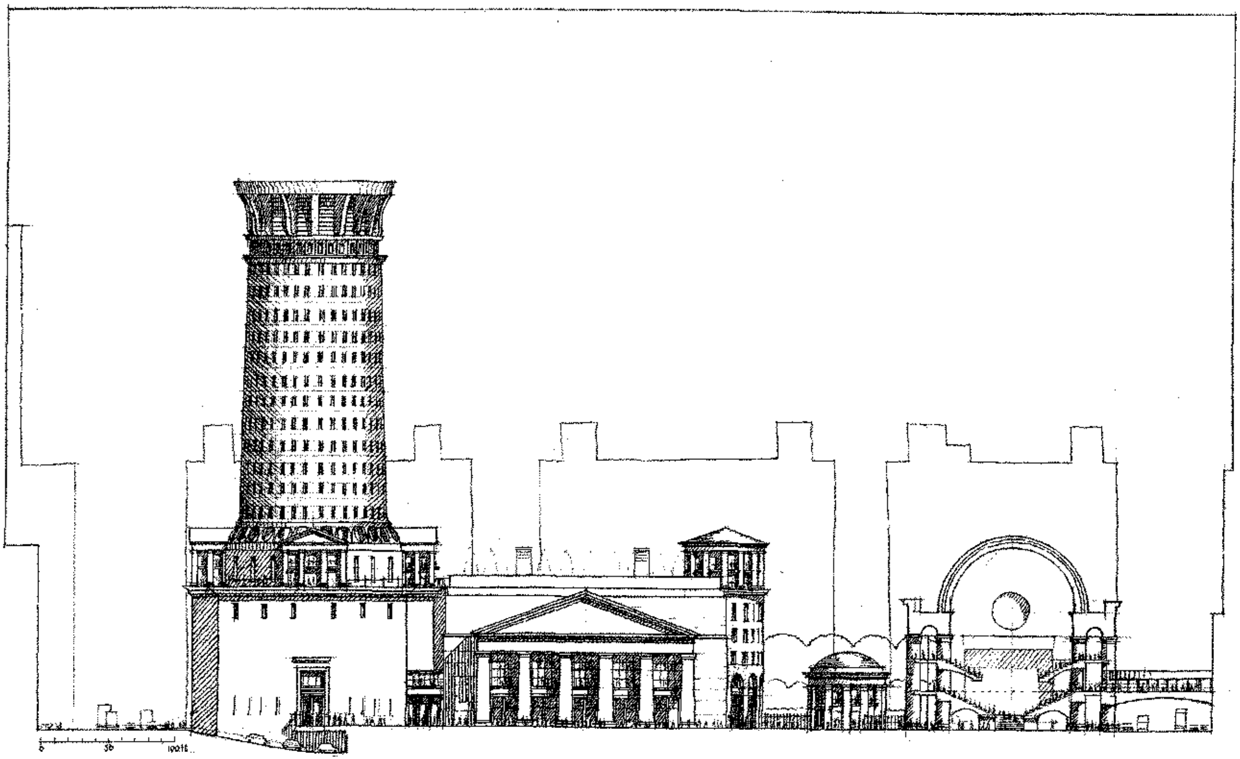
Diagonally across the new plaza, a distinctive new tower and a view of a massive Doric portico show the way to a large square at the heart of the block. In contrast to the public gesture of the plaza, this square is a pedestrian sanctuary from the clamorous roads outside. All the public buildings bound the new square. The Doric portico announces the entrance to the Metropolitan Opera House. A long Corinthian loggia flanks the south side of the court and leads to the New York State Theater. The Vivian Beaumont Theater and Avery Fisher Hall form the other sides of the square, and a rotunda gateway opens onto a relocated Damrosch Park.

Any suggestion of the monotonous repetition, grinding symmetry, and crude axiality of the original are scrupulously avoided in the buildings and spaces. Great spaces do not always have major entrances exactly in the center of each side. When buildings have different functions, they can have different characters. Classical architecture has an epic history; it has looked across the endless variety of the centuries, and there is no limit to invention. All the excitement, sophistication, and nobility of this tradition should be made available to New York in this, its cultural center.

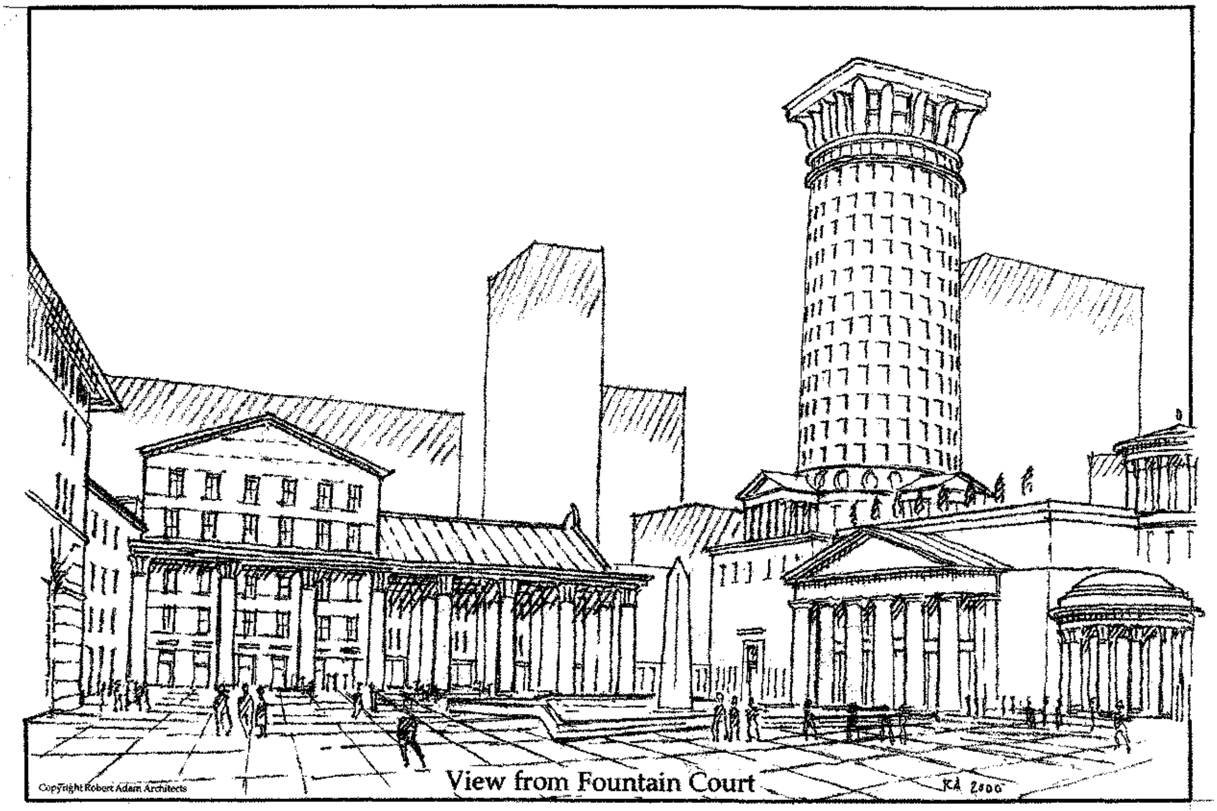
And why should culture be purged of commerce? Culture belongs in the throng of the multitude and thrives on the wealth of the people. Space made only for refinement runs the risk of sterility and exclusion. The addition of apartments and commercial buildings to Lincoln Center will add not only vitality and daylong activity to the space but also will enhance the value of the real estate.

The apartment tower has as its plinth the blind fly tower of the Metropolitan Opera House. Elevators rise to a public rooftop garden and restaurant and to the entrance to the apartments. Further elevators link the roof to Damrosch Park by way of a circular tower. On Columbus and 62nd Street, a low office building acts as a corner link between Avery Fisher Hall and the New York State Theater.

What an opportunity would be lost if the crumbling Lincoln Center were just to be patched up for the same cost as starting again. Since it was built, we have re-learned forgotten lessons about civilized space and civil architecture. Now is the time to create great monuments to the civilization that is America.



The elevation to Fountain Court (above) shows, from left to right, the Opera House Tower apartment building, the Metropolitan Opera House, the Rotunda gateway to Damrosch Park, the Vivian Beaumont Theater, and the new bridge to the Juilliard School. The view from Fountain Court looking southwest (below) shows the New York State Theater, left, and the Opera House, right.


View from Fountain Court
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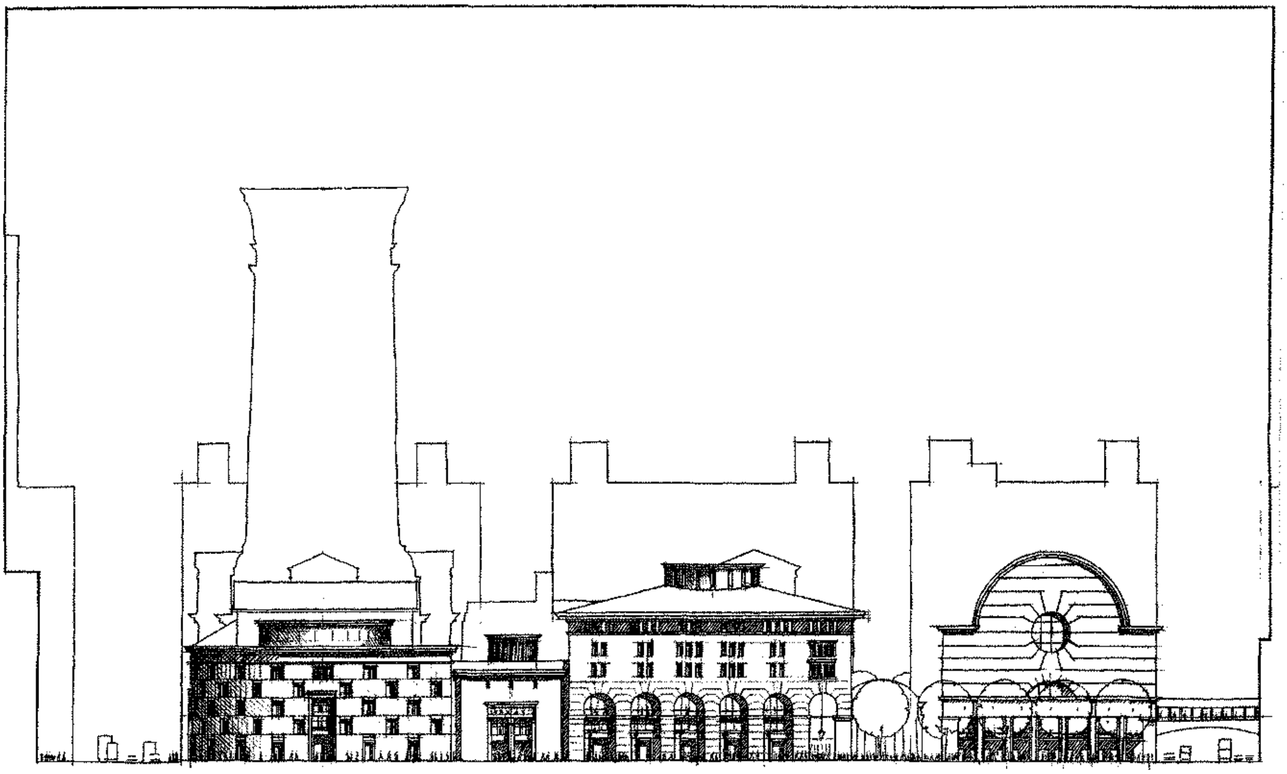
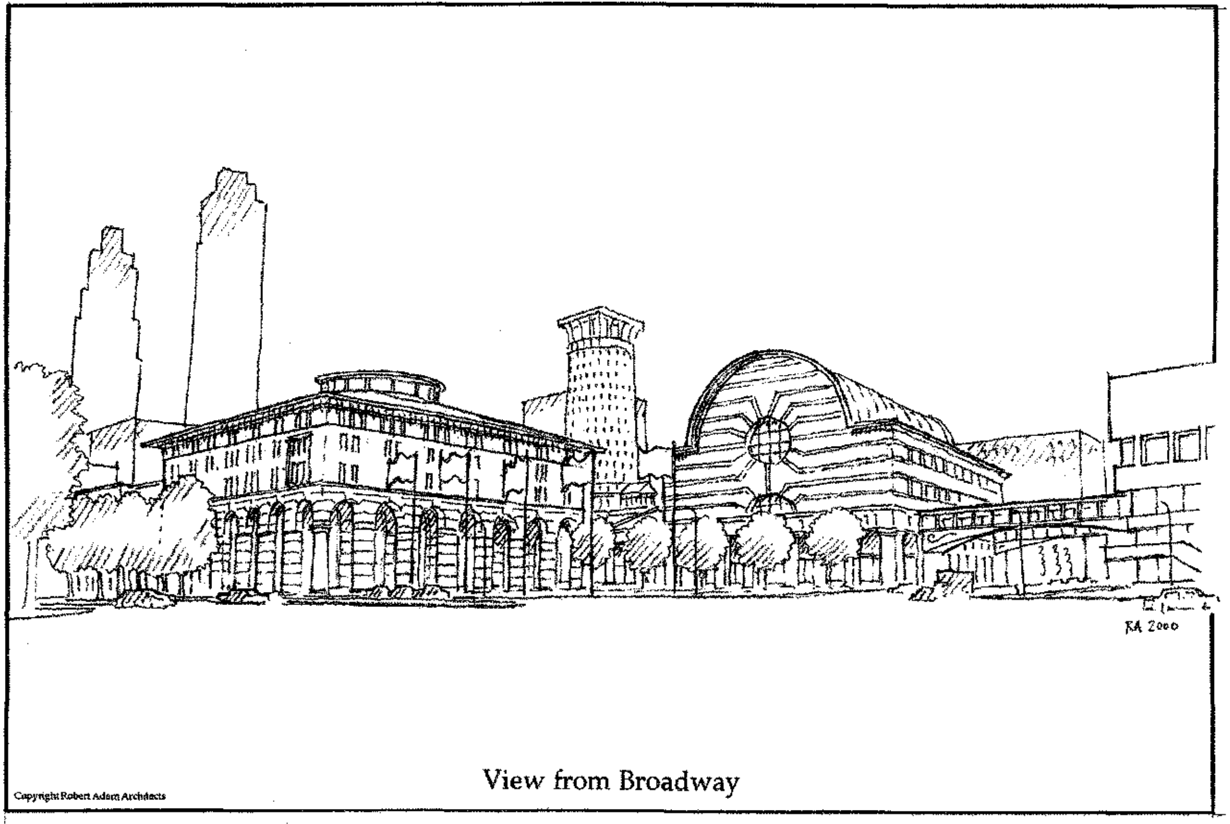
RA 2000



The elevation to Columbus Avenue (above) shows, from left to right, the Quadrant office building, the subway entrance, Avery Fisher Hall, and the Beaumont Theater. The view from Broadway looking southwest (below) shows Avery Fisher Hall at the left, the Beaumont Theater at the right, with a portion of the new Lincoln Square in front of it.



View from Broadway

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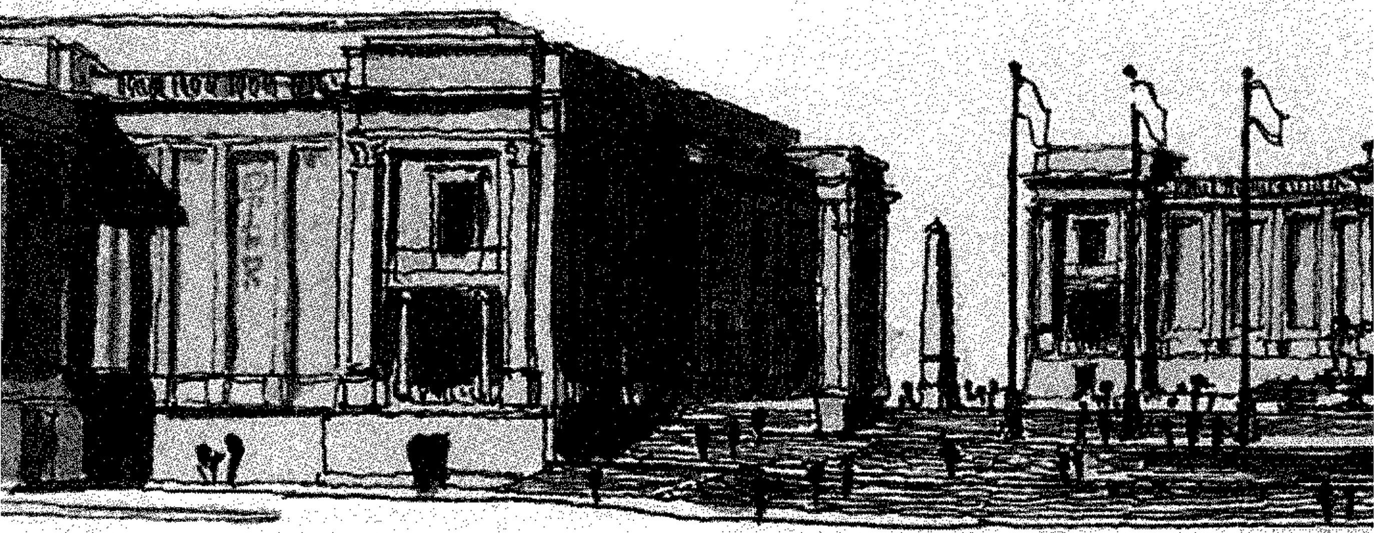


THE NEW LI

Michael M. Franck, Arthur C. Lohsen, James C. McCrery II

Lincoln Center was built at a time when architects believed that the present was so vastly different from the past that the past no longer had meaning. The atom had been split, polio cured: no problem seemed too great for the application of cold, scientific reasoning. Modern architecture was an expression of that attitude, and Lincoln Center was a collaborative effort of the most notable modernist architects of a generation.

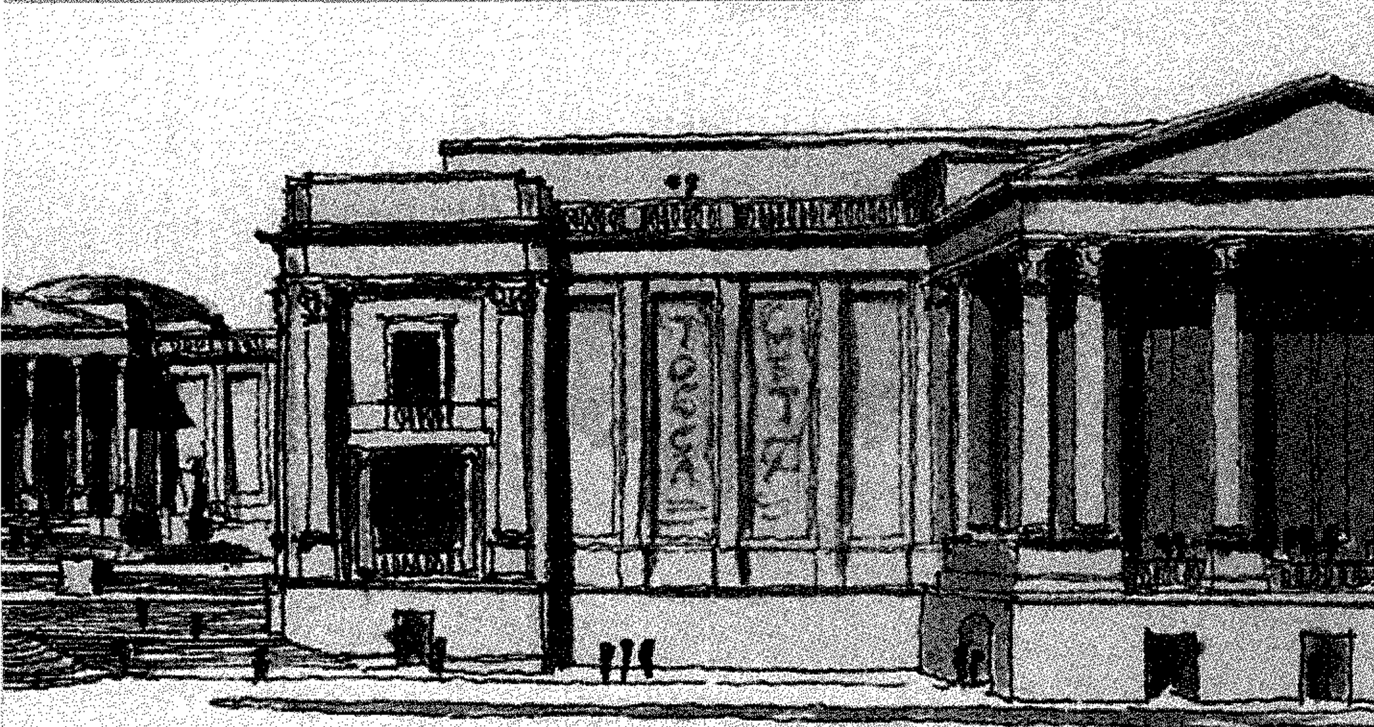
While it was noble that the designers loosely followed the urban form of Michelangelo's Campidoglio in Rome, Michelangelo's subtleties make Lincoln Center pale in comparison. Our proposal builds upon the legacy of Lincoln Center—or at least upon the Campidoglio model that inspired it.

Our buildings come out to Columbus Avenue. Their facades hold to the street edges; their great porticos embrace the street and sidewalk approaches. The difference in elevation from the street level to the courtyard level enabled us to create a grand staircase that spills onto Columbus Avenue, connecting the entire complex to the city. The New York State Theater and Avery Fisher Hall, twins, define and contain the plaza. The plaza facade of the twins follows more closely the Campidoglio example through the simple gesture of angling the facades—a device that further defines and contains the plaza. The main halls of each of these buildings open onto the plaza, and two-story arcades along the north and south sides of the plaza shelter small cafés, which enhance the celebratory character of a quintessentially urban space.

The Metropolitan Opera House, both central and removed, sits upon its pedestal above the plaza but is also a full participant in the formation of that space. The composition of the facade brings scale to the building and to the plaza. Large panels on the front facade, similar to those on the Columbus Avenue facades of the twins, will frame banners promoting current and forthcoming events, and a temple-like front portico serves as the ceremonial entry. The friezes and panels on all the buildings invite inscriptions commemorating great composers or conductors.

The plaza—its character and shape defined by the architecture of the three buildings that contain it—is unlike any other urban space in New York. Arcades and stairs ensure a pedestrian flow in and around it, making people central to its drama, and the obelisks, statues, fountains, pedestals, and flagpoles that enliven the space provide places for people to gather.

The complex along Amsterdam Avenue again holds to the avenue's edge, participating in the



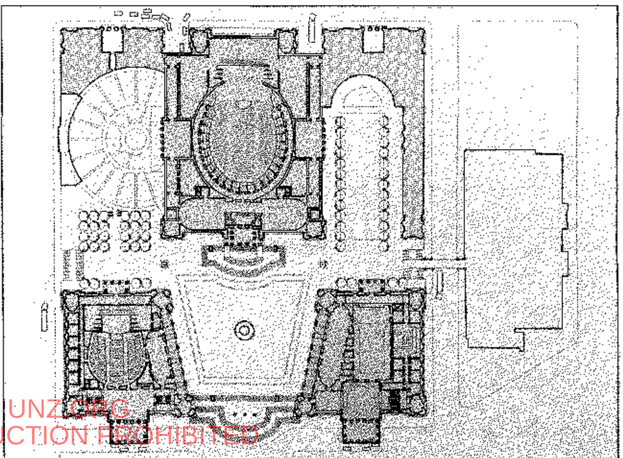
COLN CENTER

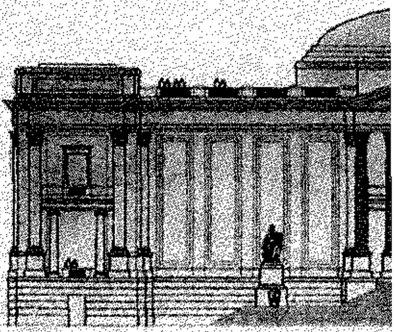
endeavor of all great urban architecture: making good streets. The buildings house retail spaces along their Amsterdam Avenue side, with offices above. To the north of the Opera House, the new home to the Vivian Beaumont Theater and Library is arranged in a manner that encloses an exterior garden intended for outdoor musical performances. The south facade of the Opera House incorporates the proscenium and stage for a new outdoor amphitheater.

The new Lincoln Center would be much easier to visit. A three-lane drop-off at grade would be sheltered by the porticos at the New York State Theater and Avery Fisher Hall. Four entrances lead down into a parking structure beneath the entire site. Loading docks are likewise below ground, removing such eyesores from the pedestrian's realm. A smaller, graceful bridge replaces the virtually unused brutal concrete structure that now connects the plaza to the Juilliard School, opening 65th Street to light and air.

The architecture of the new Lincoln Center is classical—an architectural language shared by all of Western society, developing over thousands of years and capable of dynamic development in the present and future. It is founded on the human form and has human scale, even in the largest of buildings. It is an architecture of curves, of shifting shadows, of subtlety. It seeks, unashamedly, to be harmonious and beautiful.

Classical architecture is physically and stylistically durable. Most buildings today are built to last 25 years before major renovation or replacement. Classical architecture employs solid materials and construction methods that have been developed and improved over millennia to shed water and hold buildings together. That means that our children will not have to rebuild what we leave them. Fifty years from now, our grandchildren will be evaluating our decisions, as we are now evaluating the original Lincoln Center. Should we not leave behind us an embodiment of the timeless values of humanity?





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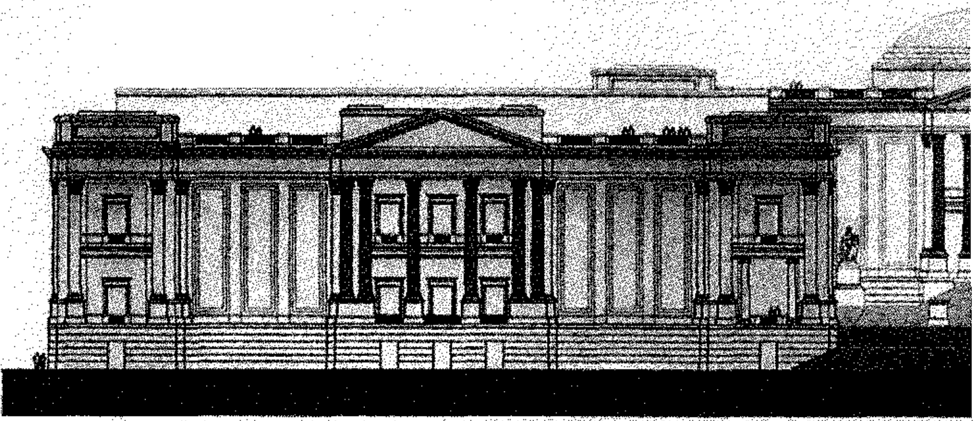

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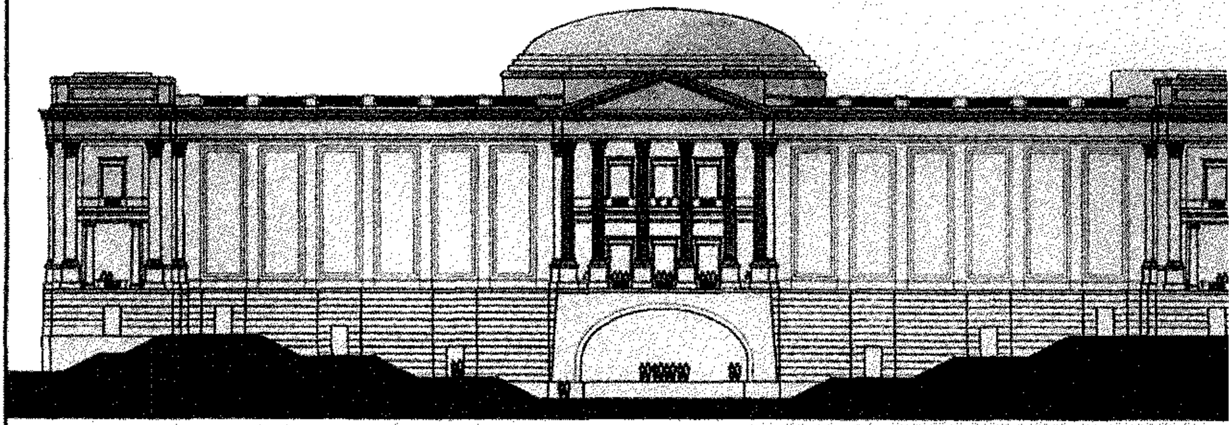

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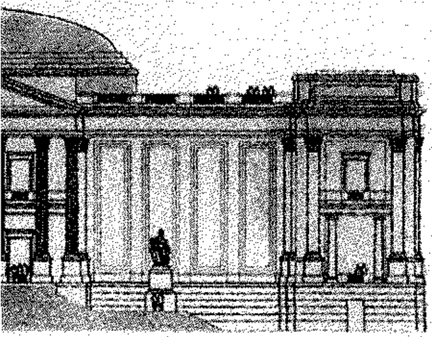

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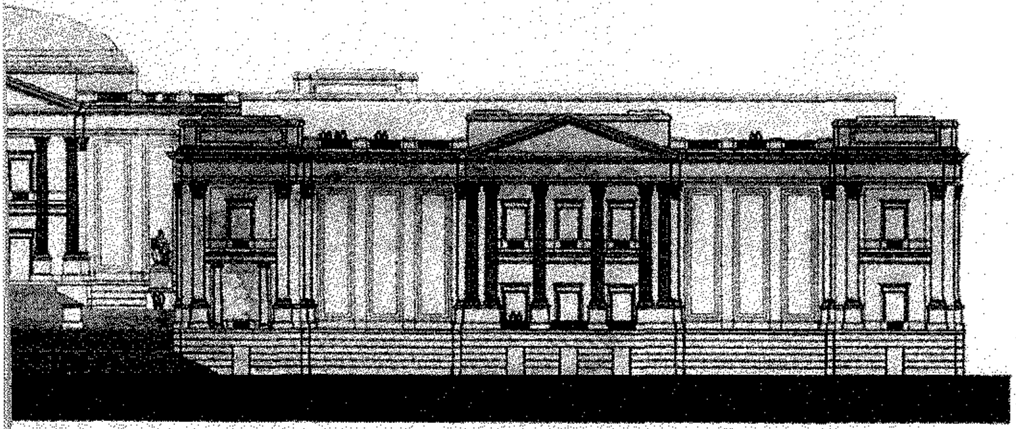

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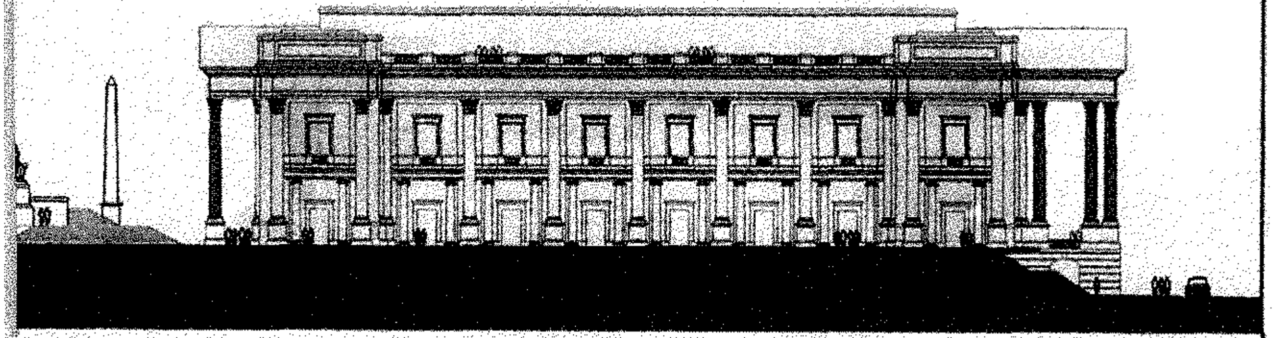

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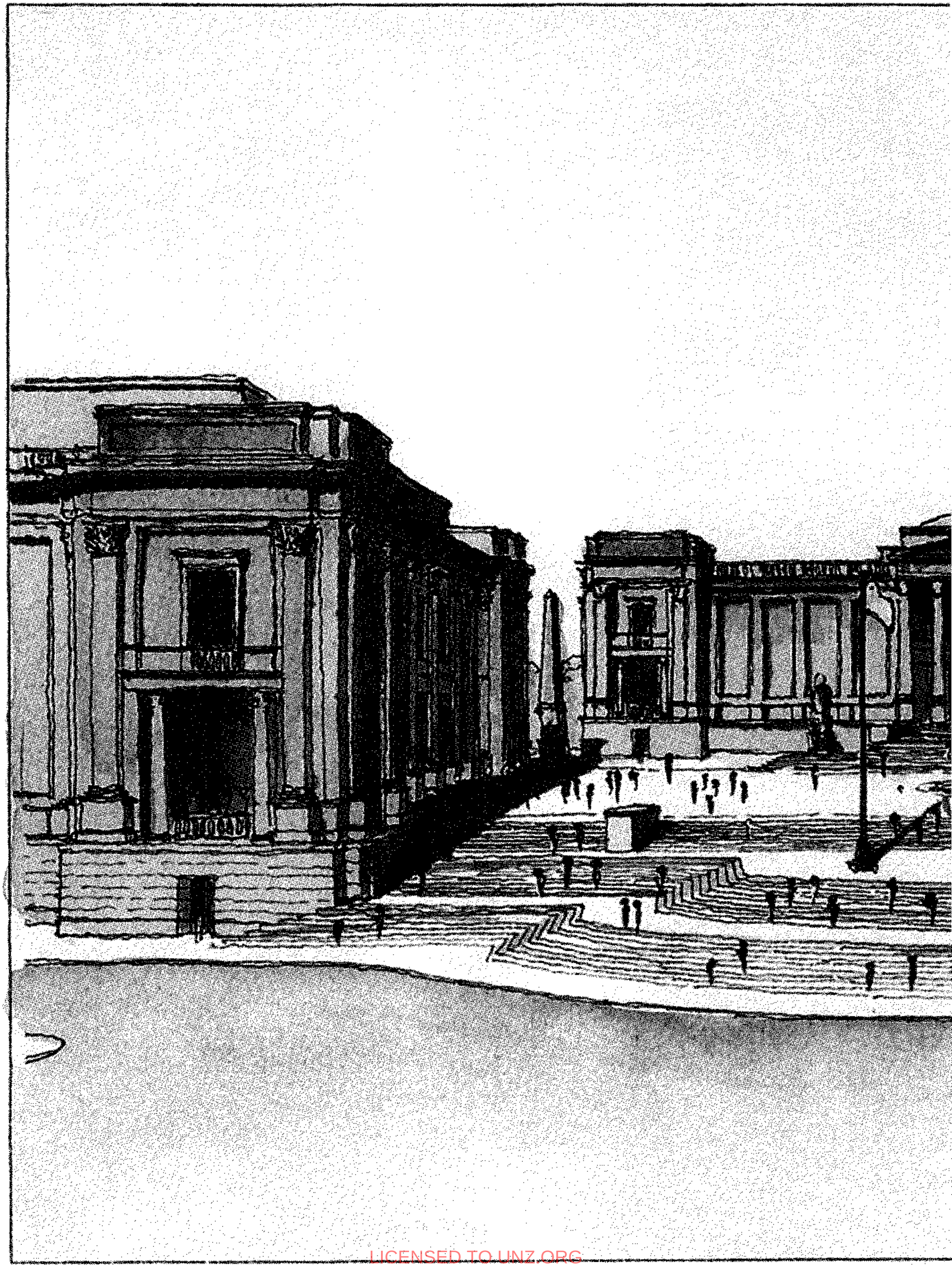

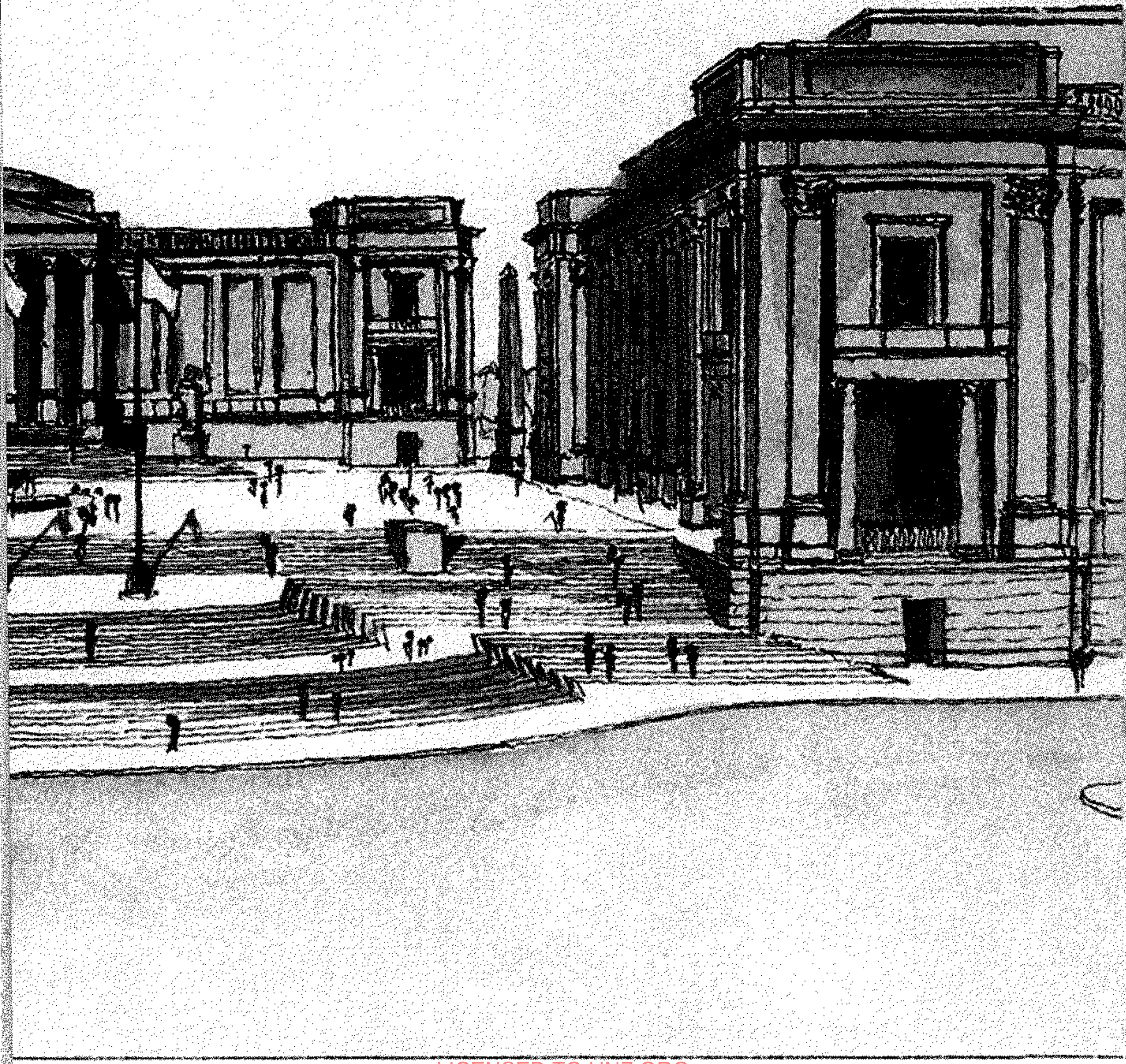

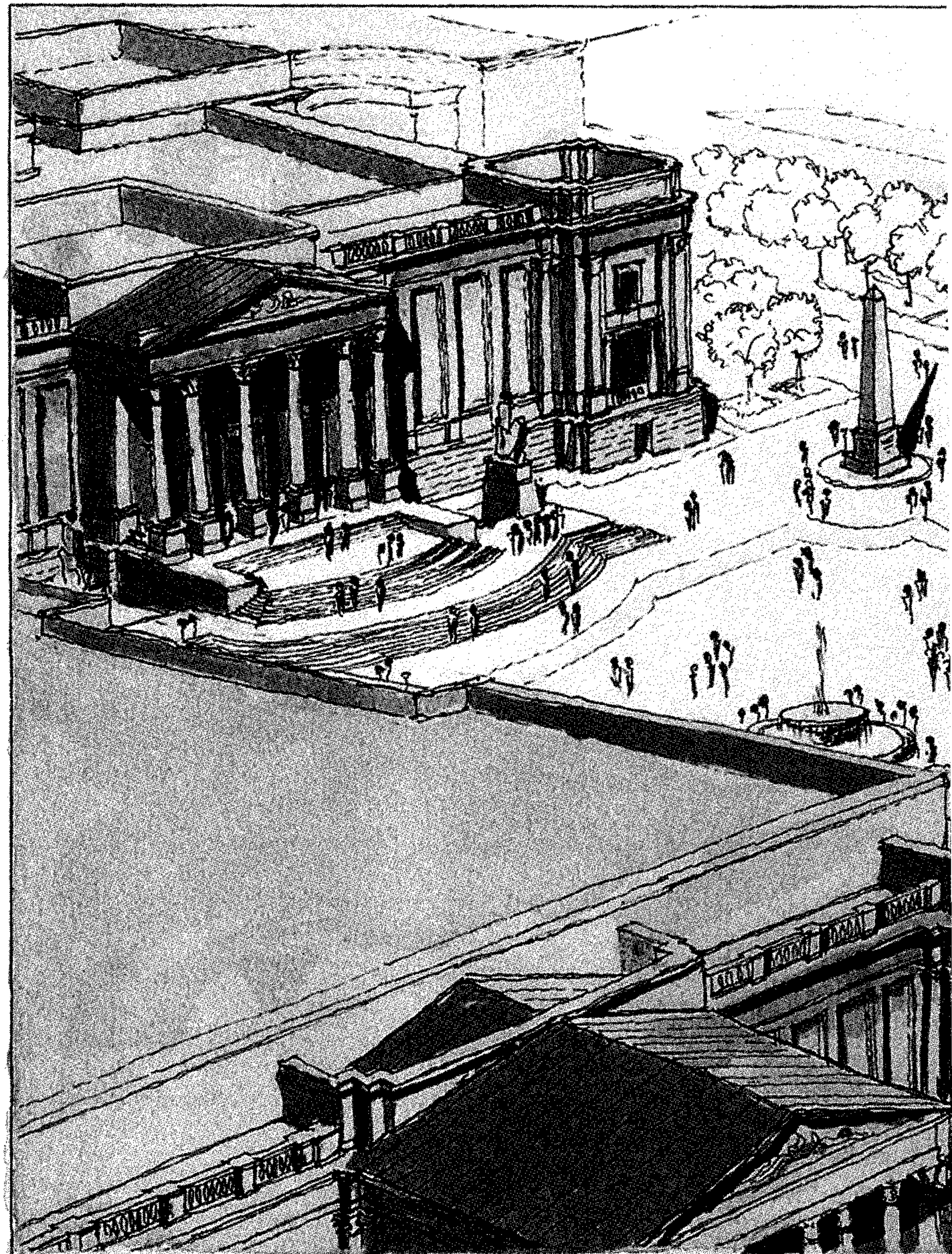

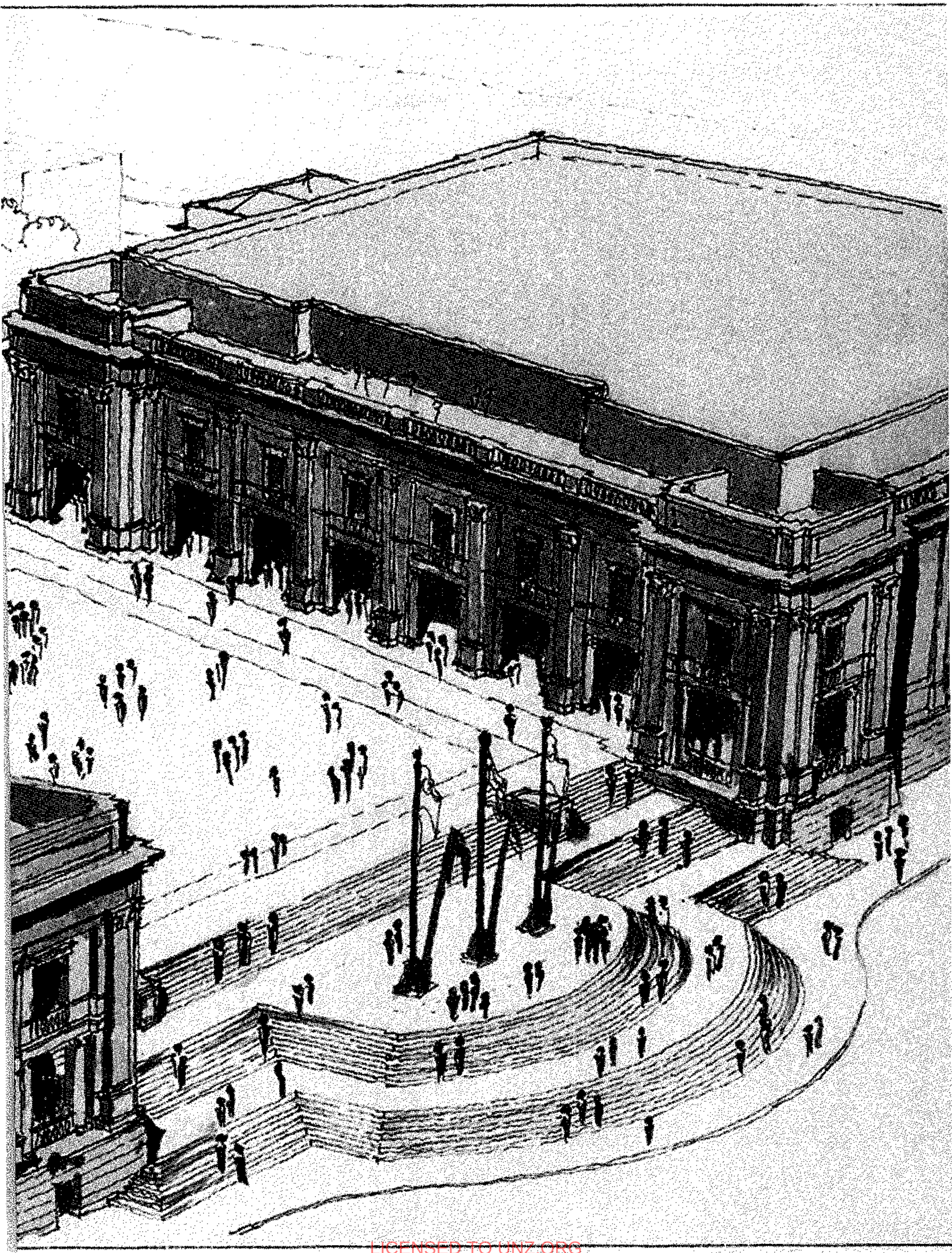

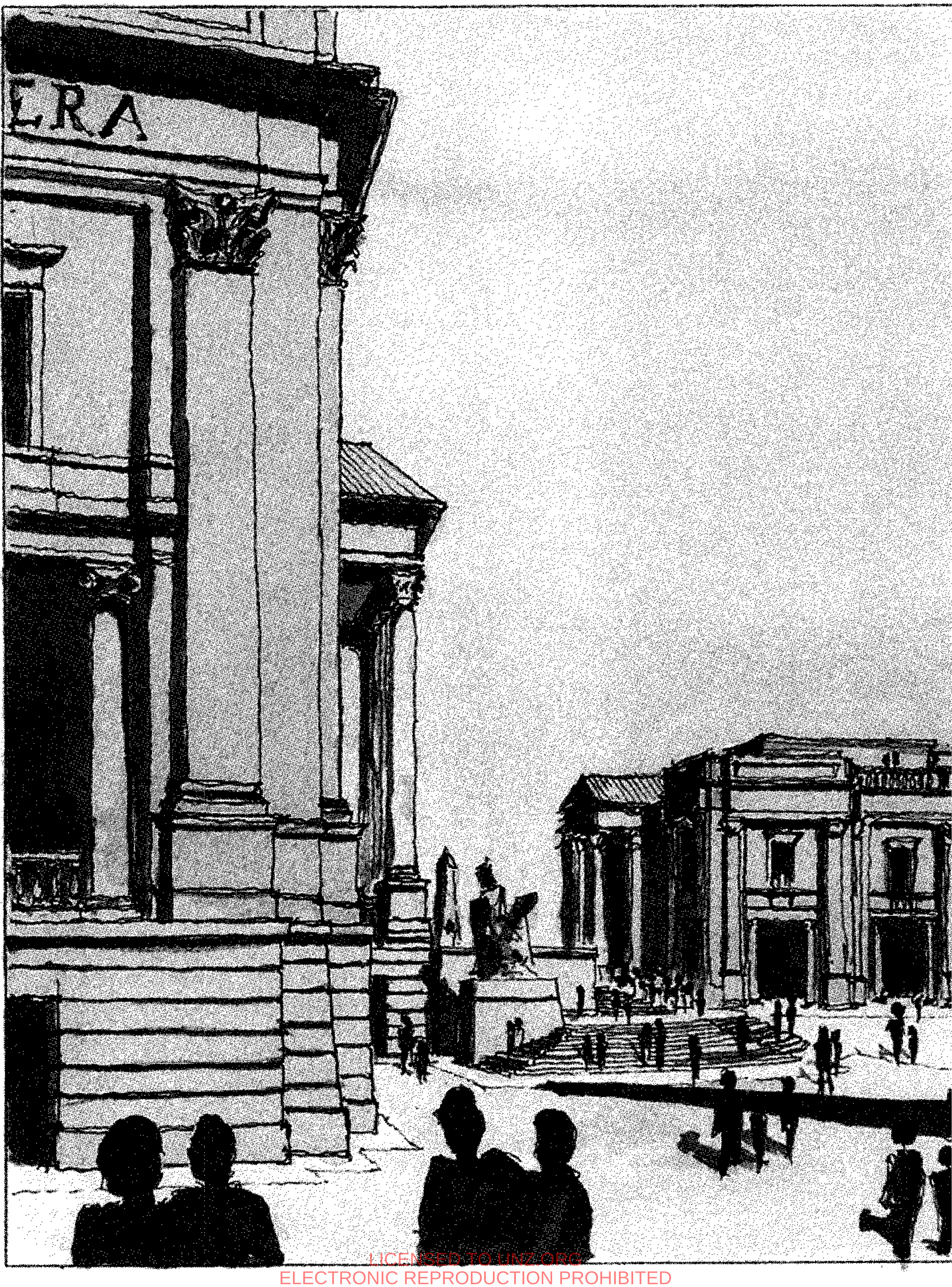
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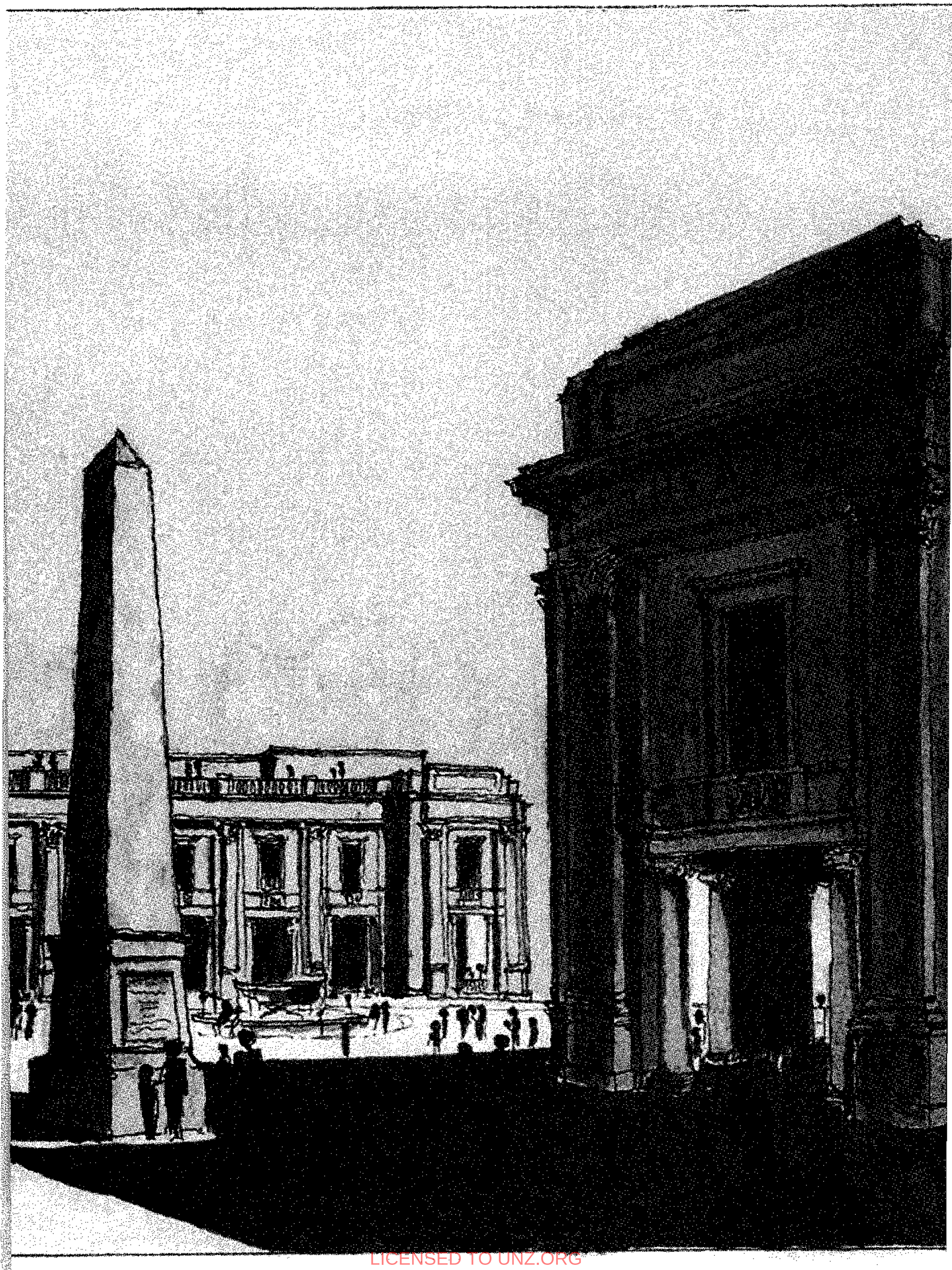

What Is Public Education?

It doesn't have to be what we have now: big, centralized districts, with ed-school-trained teachers. In Arizona, we have a better model: equal money for each kid, maximum choice, and tough standards.

Lisa Graham Keegan

One constant cry in the debate over educational reform is that we must save our public schools. But proponents of that argument assume that a public school system must be exactly what we have today: schools clustered in districts governed by centralized bureaucracies that oversee every detail of what goes on in individual schools, from budgets to personnel to curricula. That's like saying that our steel industry should center on open-hearth furnaces and giant corporations rather than the nimble mini-mills that have largely superseded them. Let's agree, for argument, that a public school system is a good thing: but why should it look just like it does today—which is what it looked like 50 years ago?

There's nothing sacrosanct, after all, about the current structure of our public education system. Its roots go back to the nineteenth century, when a geographical community would club together to hire and pay a teacher and later, when things got more complicated, would tax property to provide a local school and then appoint or elect a few people to a small board that would oversee it and hire its teacher. As the communities grew into towns and cities, it seemed logical to expand the governing mechanisms already in place. Tiny school boards slowly swelled into today's bloated and dysfunctional school districts, responsible for running not one but 5 or 25 or 50 schools.

If we want to save the public schools, we mustn't confuse the ideal of public education—that every child has the right to a good K-12 education at public expense—with any particular system, including the one we've got. Surely we can come up with a modernized definition of public education fit for a new millennium. In Arizona, where I'm Superintendent of Public Instruction, that's just what we're trying to achieve. Our new approach, aimed at shifting power from bureaucrats to students and families, has three key, equally essential parts: student-centered funding, parental choice, and tough, objectively measurable, standards.

Start with student-centered funding. In Arizona, we've all but replaced an older and more typical system, in which school districts assess and use local property taxes to fund schools, with one in which the state raises the money (including for capital construction) through a statewide tax, straps an equal amount of it to each student's back, and releases it only when he walks into the school of his choice.

BETTMAN/CORBIS

For some conservatives, a state-run financing system instead of the local property-tax model seems counterintuitive. Aren't we undermining the bedrock conservative value of local control? But if local control means *school district* control, we shouldn't hesitate to use state policy to undermine it, just as 20 years ago, British prime minister Margaret Thatcher used state power to weaken the socialist-run local councils that threatened her popular free-market reforms. What we aim to do in our state is to devolve authority down to the level of the individual school and the individual family.

Especially in a place like Arizona, the traditional school district is one of the biggest obstacles to improving the public schools. Today's district is a rigid command-and-control system that offers dissatisfied parents no choices except, if they don't like the district school, to send their kids to private school or to home-school them. Moreover, like the Soviet Union with its five-year plans, the districts do a poor job of management, for the reason F. A. Hayek pointed out: command-and-control systems suffer from an information deficit. How can a distant district office bureaucrat know how to run a school better than the principals and teachers who work there? Too often, the district just lays down a single set of policies to govern all its schools, imposing one-size-fits-all curricula and disciplinary policies on schools that may have very different needs. The system also seems impervious to reform from within. In my experience, those who join district boards, even those who start out reform-minded, eerily become co-opted and wind up defending the system tooth and nail. It's just like watching *Invasion of the Body Snatchers.*

If you need an additional reason to abolish the traditional property-tax funding system, consider this: it's unfair. Funding education through local property taxes is deeply regressive. It lets rich districts spend more per pupil, at much lower tax rates, than poor districts. After all, a rich district's citizens who pay $3,000 per year on their $300,000 houses are paying 10 percent in taxes; the poor district's citizens who pay $1,200 on their $100,000 houses are paying 12 percent.

Our student-centered funding system is more equitable, for two reasons. First, each child receives roughly the same amount of educational funds (except disabled kids, who get more). Second, since the state tax is the funding source, taxpayers bear burdens more proportional to their wealth. But parents who want to donate extra to their local school—for an art teacher or a librarian, say—can subtract up to $200 of that donation from their state income tax.

The equal funding per pupil in Arizona isn't perfect, however. The school district still gets in the way, allocating the per-pupil funds to its various schools rather than leaving the money inseparably attached to the individual student. Say a school is "worth" $3 million because of the number of students its no-nonsense principal and its back-to-basics phonics instruction have attracted. The district might give it only $2 million, taking $500,000 for itself and sending the rest to the floundering group-hug school up north, which is losing students in droves. There's no way to track for sure how the district divvies up the funds. In November, though, Arizonans likely will vote in favor of a ballot measure that boosts school funding but also traces funds right to the school a student attends instead of stopping short at the district level. Publicized, this information will pressure districts to make sure the money goes where it should go.

Once you have student-centered funding, you can easily create a competitive educational marketplace, which will reward good schools for their success and let poor ones languish and go out of business, if parents are able to choose among public schools. In 1994, the state legislature (of which I was then a member) gave parents just that power, with two important laws. It passed an open enrollment law, so that students could attend any district public school in the state if it still had room after neighborhood kids signed up. Even more important, the Arizona School Improvement Act allowed for the creation of charter schools that operate free from school-district control, dictate their own instructional programs, and make their own personnel decisions (including hiring talented non-union and uncertified teachers who lack ed-school degrees). This law passed as a compromise between proponents of a more radical school-voucher system and defenders of the command-and-control school-district system.

Thanks to the charter law, Arizona now has an educational marketplace with more, and more meaningful, public school choice than any other state in the nation. Since 1994, we've seen more than 400 charter schools blossom, serving approximately 50,000 students, roughly 6 percent of our public school population. There's now a charter school within commuting distance of almost every school district in Arizona.

The reason so many charter schools sprouted in Arizona so quickly is that, once again, we bypassed the school districts. The early charter movement floundered a decade ago because most states forced schools to obtain charters from local school boards. No surprise that charters weren't springing up fast: this would be like Burger King asking for permission to sell Whoppers in the local McDonald's. There's just not going to be any enthusiasm to help out the competition. To encourage the formation of charter schools, we gave two state bodies—the Board of Education and a governor-appointed State Board for Charter Schools—the power to grant 25 charters a year each, completely independent of districts (which also have the power to grant charters, whether they want it or not). We also let individual charters open multiple campuses. Last year, three of the bigger schools ran more than 40 campuses, all told.

> **"What we aim to do in our state is to devolve authority down to the level of the individual school and the individual family."**

Finally, we made it easy to get a charter. The charter organizers propose a contract that lays out the school's goals, financial plan, and personnel practices. The school must guarantee that it will be open to all students, including those with special needs. If approved, the school then receives funding directly from the state for each student it enrolls—a funding scheme that could (and should) extend to vouchers for private schools in the future. The charter contract runs 15 years, but the chartering agent can revoke it at any time for academic failure or financial mismanagement. And then it's up to the school to be good enough to attract and keep enough pupils to stay in business.

Many of the charters that have sprung up since 1994 have back-to-basics curricula, signaling a powerful reaction against the district schools' faddish educational philosophies and vapid teaching. One of the best basics schools is the Tempe Preparatory Academy, founded in 1996 by a group of college professors. Tempe Prep is Arizona's second-highest-achieving public school, with only a Tucson magnet school that, unusually, is allowed to select its students based on academic ability beating it out. Tempe Prep is a gift to its students. I don't think it would exist if not for the charter possibility.

Reading the school's mission statement, you suddenly find yourself a million miles away from ed-school jargon. "Using a 'Great Books' approach," the statement reads, the school's purpose "is to educate your child in the best tradition of American education. . . . Each student will learn how to reason correctly, express him/herself articulately" and "value the virtue of self-discipline and integrity."

What's so fascinating about Tempe Prep isn't just its magnificent curriculum of Homer, Chaucer, and Montaigne, but the fact that, like lots of charters, it doesn't require its teachers to be certified or ed-school-educated. Instead, the school boasts an impressive staff of instructors who hold advanced degrees in their subject areas—just like a first-rate private school. Tempe Prep's breathtaking success gives weight to the seemingly obvious, but too often ignored, truth that effective teaching depends mostly on a teacher's knowledge of the instructional material, not on possessing an education degree.

About two-thirds of Arizona's charter secondary schools target "at risk" kids, who often drop out of uninspiring district schools. That's not surprising: many of these kids came from inner-city districts where low-performing schools make the need for a charter-school alternative greatest. The most successful of the "at risk" charters is the Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy, founded by former Arizona Teacher of the Year Karen Butterfield. Her immediate purpose in launching the charter was to save a group of troubled but artistically gifted high school students languishing in her old district school. Stoically braving her former colleagues' hostility—they saw her new endeavor as disloyal to their shared school-district experience—Butterfield hired a strong staff of demanding teachers and set up a few ramshackle, portable buildings on the grounds of the local museum to welcome the tiny first class of students.

Flagstaff's academically challenging environment and disciplined arts program show what good a content-rich public education can achieve, even with seemingly lost kids. One time dropouts now found themselves pursuing high-level mathematics and classical literature along with a full arts curriculum. The charter's students consistently rank among the highest academic achievers in the state. When I asked one of the teachers why they were succeeding with these kids where the district schools fail, he responded, "Nobody had ever asked the students to read and comment on Dostoevsky before."

Not all our experiences with charter schools have been so positive. Given that 30 percent of new small businesses fail, I've often consoled myself that our having had to close a dozen charter schools out of 400 is pretty good. But it's never fun to close a school—it's bad for the students and bad for public education as a whole. Far better to shut down a school, though, than to let a poorly performing or fraudulent enterprise continue—and in theory this principle would hold true of a poorly performing district school, too.

One of the toughest closures brought an end to one of Arizona's first and most beloved charter schools: Phoenix's Citizen 2000, founded in 1995 by an energetic African-American educator, Lawndia White Venerable. The new charter soon gained a first-rate reputation for its demanding coursework and disciplined classrooms among the predominantly black families who enrolled their kids there. Unfortunately, though Citizen 2000's academic program remained outstanding, the school's management came under fire for overstating its enrollment in order to bring in more state funds. In 1997, after the school had lost its charter, a grand jury indicted Venerable and her sister Loretha Johnson, the school's assistant principal, on 31 counts of theft, fraud, and misuse of some $200,000 in public money.

Charter critics have pointed to Citizen 2000 to heap scorn on the whole idea of parental choice and

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a market-based approach to public education. But the critics ignored a far more important story: the large number of parents who remained loyal to a school they strongly suspected of shady business dealings, because, as one mother put it, "For the first time, my child is treated as she would be in a private school. Everybody knows her name, and she is expected to do her work." For these parents, Citizen 2000 offered their kids an unparalleled academic experience. Nearly all of them enrolled their children in other charter schools after we closed Citizen 2000's doors. Liberty in school selection is addictive.

All three of these schools began as dreams of educators tired of the mediocrity and failure of the school-district system. Indeed, the charter school pioneers in Arizona were the fed-up parents and frustrated teachers who knew public schools could achieve a much higher standard of excellence. I once had a conversation with a group of such teachers who had left their positions as leaders of their local union to start a charter. These were wonderful people, delightfully obnoxious about their mission: they would use whatever lever they could to get the control in the classroom they felt they needed. Many of these missionaries, a recent survey shows, took out second mortgages or went without salaries to keep their charters open during the tough early going, when they didn't have many students or much money. To save money, some plucky charters used parents as lawyers and janitors and maintenance workers. If you wanted an example of Tocqueville's American spirit of association, here it was, in spades.

In a second wave, four national for-profit charter companies have opened schools in the state. These firms have several advantages the missionaries don't always possess. They've already got stable financing, they have a developed and tested educational approach, and they market themselves well in the surrounding communities.

One of the best, Advantage Schools Inc., opened in a poor section of Phoenix in 1996. Advantage's educational method is "Direct Instruction," which relies on scripted lessons and student recitation—old-fashioned stuff. If you walked into an early-grade Advantage reading lesson, you'd hear a teacher read a passage from a book and then ask the class to read it back to her. In math, it works the same way. Teacher: "Two plus two is four. What is two plus two?" Children: "Four." A major long-term research project identified Direct Instruction as the most effective teaching method among all those it surveyed. Few public school educators are comfortable with it, though, since it is so strict, and it offends the "child-as-discoverer" orthodoxy prevalent in today's schools.

Parents love it, however, and the students' academic results far exceed their performance in district schools. In Arizona, Advantage's student population has rocketed from just over 200 in their first year to more than 1,000 four years later. A large number of these students are Hispanics who initially lack English proficiency. Before it brings these kids into the English-language classrooms, Advantage puts them through an intensive English program that has most of them proficient by the end of six months. This approach differs dramatically from the typical bilingual-ed program, whose defenders claim it takes up to *ten years* for a student to become proficient enough to enter an English classroom.

Like many charters, the school is orderly and disciplined, a real selling point for parents concerned with school safety and outraged by anarchic district-school classrooms. I'm a huge fan of Advantage's attendance enforcer, who leaves the school every day to track down any children who don't show up. She's not a mild woman, and as a parent myself, I've often pondered how I would react if she came knocking at my door wondering why my kids weren't in school—scared, probably. Her imposing presence sends a powerful message to parents and students: this school cares about educating its children.

We'd love it if Advantage opened more campuses in Arizona, but the firm has chosen to expand in those states that pay more per pupil than we do. Because of Arizona's low operational funding of $4,700 per pupil, we now find ourselves on the losing end of an increasingly competitive national market for charter schools. If the November school bill passes, though, we'll be in a better position to compete.

How are charters doing academically? As a group, their average performance is on par with district schools, with early signs that students may be progressing faster in the charters. Individually, charter schools tend to group at the extremes, producing some of the best and worst performances in the state—though good performances far outpace poor ones.

If the students are doing well, so are charter teachers, who feel more empowered in charter schools. According to a recent study of Arizona's "desert bloom" published in *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine, almost two-thirds of teachers in Arizona's charter elementary schools reported they had high levels of influence over curricula, compared with just a quarter in district schools. Charter teachers also tend to have much closer relationships with colleagues, principals, and parents than their district counterparts, the study reports.

> **"'For the first time, my child is treated as she would be in a private school. She is expected to do her work.'"**

Charter schools not only give parents a wider range of choices. By drawing students and money out of district schools, they pressure the rest of the system to become more accountable. Two districts lost huge numbers of students to charters. The Mesa Unified District, the biggest in the state, lost 7 percent of its enrollment—5,000 kids. Students fled the smaller Flagstaff District at an even more rapid rate, with 10 percent of them enrolling in charters.

The first response of Arizona's school districts to their new rivals was to try to discredit them. We heard a lot about "uncredentialed and unaccountable" charter schools, and some district officials reportedly spread rumors that charter operators were racist in order to cut off potential minority support.

The next reaction—far more encouraging—was for the district schools that were losing students to charters to try to understand why. Some particularly hard-hit districts, like Roosevelt in inner-city Phoenix, wrote letters to parents to discover their reasons for removing their children. Another Phoenix district actually sent teachers and administrators into the homes of parents who had removed their kids to find out why they were so unhappy with district schools. Mesa Unified even had staff researchers travel to the state education department to pore over charter proposals—"checking up on the competition," as the *Phi Delta Kappan* study put it.

It took a few years for these lessons to kick in. But now, in a third reaction, district schools are adopting many of the educational models that drew parents to charters, including back-to-basics curricula. By returning to phonics instruction, the Queen Creek District won back a third of the students it lost to a charter school. Mesa Unified lost many of its Mormon students to a charter, because the district refused to enlarge a back-to-basics magnet school that Mormon parents loved. To stem the flow of students out of the district, Mesa eventually relented, and opened a new "three R's" magnet school.

Fourth, district schools have begun to market themselves more aggressively. Schools now advertise in the paper, on the radio, even in movie theaters. The need to recruit students couldn't be clearer. Of course, to recruit effectively, you must have a good product to sell. We believe the presence of competition is a principal reason we've seen statistically significant improvements in reading, writing, and math scores in the public schools in each of the past three years.

If Arizona funds students, not districts, and has freed schools from district control, what's left for the school district to do? Defenders say that districts create economies of scale, letting a group of schools buy supplies in bulk or contract with vendors at a better rate. But this is no longer true. By turning to Internet vending auctions, a single 200-member school can these days get the same breaks as a huge district. A more sensible role for districts—if we even retained them—would be to function as corporate boards of directors do, overseeing schools in which, say, they had placed inspirational leaders who got to hire and fire staff and set their own agendas. Otherwise, the district board would stay out of the way. So in effect you'd have a system of relatively autonomous individual schools—some wholly independent charter schools and some with the loose oversight of a district board.

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY/CORBIS

The third part of our new model of public education is tough, objective standards and mandatory state testing. As for standards, the market will drive schools to attain educational excellence only if we have a clear idea of what excellence is. When I first became superintendent, Arizona's standards for reading, writing, and math came up to my waist. There wasn't a teacher in Arizona who could understand them. When there aren't any clear standards, however, education succumbs to the latest ed-school fluff: self-esteem, diversity, gender equity, you name it. We simplified and revised the standards and made some of them non-negotiable. All kindergarteners now receive phonics instruction, for example.

Testing is crucial. By 2004, Arizona high school kids will have to pass AIMS—the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards test—in order to get a diploma. AIMS forces schools to teach students what they need to know to thrive in today's economy. High school kids will have to pass all three parts of the test: reading, writing, and math. It's not fluff. On the reading test for fiction, they'll need to show they can interpret meaning, analyze character, and understand the use of figurative language. For nonfiction, they'll have to make connections and appropriate generalizations and sum up succinctly what they've read. To pass the writing exam, they'll have to write a narrative with complex characters, with a plot structure and a point of view, and they'll have to do it grammatically. In math, they'll have to know logic, algebra, geometry, data analysis and probability, and measurement.

Arizona will include the results of the test in the report cards we issue on all the state's public schools. The report cards include, in addition to scores of standardized tests, a school's personnel information, educational philosophy, and the number of crimes committed in the school (if any). The publicity the report cards attract will put pressure on schools with poor scores to shape up. And the reports will help parents make rational decisions when they choose a public school for their children.

Student-centered funding, parental choice, and tough standards—what more do you need to make a public education system that serves all students well? It's what we are moving toward in Arizona, and it's a far cry from what exists now in the rest of the nation. ■

How to Train Cops

New York's Police Academy does a model job of turning raw recruits into efficient officers. It should put more focus on good vs. bad, less on black vs. white.

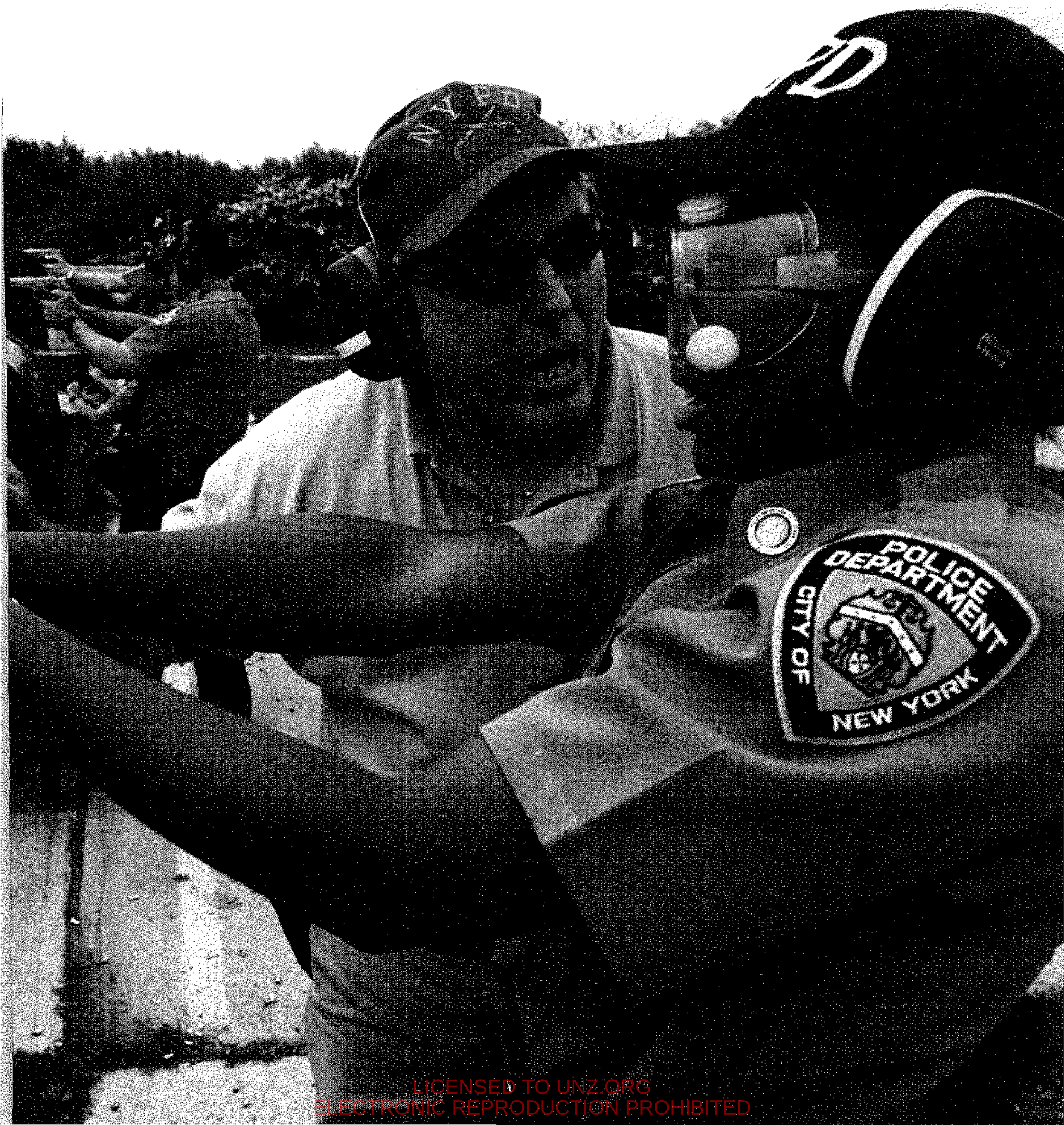
Heather Mac Donald

Critics of the New York Police Department have attacked its officer training as vehemently as they've excoriated the rest of the department. Because the Police Academy fails to appreciate "diversity," they complain, it graduates officers insensitive to "the community," uncontrolled in the use of force, and, in the slanderous formulation of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, all too likely to "torture or kill people of color."

Obviously, none of these hyperactive critics has ever set foot inside New York's Police Academy. Anyone who has done so, with just an ounce of good faith, would have to conclude that the NYPD has forged a training message as relentlessly focused on restraint and respect as anyone could hope for. Education at the Academy is a model of how to integrate rigorous tactical instruction with an unequivocal mandate of communication and service.

And, far from ignoring "diversity," the NYPD is—to its detriment—awash in the spurious "diversity" ideology. Capitulating to political pressure in the wake of the 1997 brutalization of Abner Louima and the 1999 shooting of Amadou Diallo, the department has devoted ever more instructional hours to moronic "anti-racism" training. In so doing, it has imposed an irrelevant solution on a far more complex problem: teaching officers to respond appropriately to challenges to their authority. The Academy does tackle the critical issues of attitude and authority forthrightly; it would have more capacity to do so, however, without its useless investment in sensitivity reeducation.

Police Academy Photographs by Les Stone


NYPD
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The crown jewel of NYPD training is In-Tac, for "In-Service Tactical Training," a series of role-playing exercises on New York streets, designed to put officers through as accurate a simulation of real-life policing as possible. The exercises reproduce situations New York cops have actually confronted, sometimes fatally.

On a quiet street next to an army armory in upper Manhattan, four recruits are making a felony car stop—the most dangerous job police ever encounter. Cars confer an enormous advantage on violent criminals: they can kill, and they contain a wealth of hiding places for weapons. A green Chevy matching the description of a car used in two recent armed robberies has just driven by; the gunmen are presumably inside. The recruits stop their patrol car and command over the loudspeaker: "Pull over! Driver, put your hands out the window and on the roof of the car! Take your keys out of the ignition, and put them on the roof!"

"'You cannot let your temper take you. They'll know if they can get to you; be very careful not to get hooked.'"

The corpulent, mustachioed driver whines: "Officer, I'm late!" In the next moment, the front-seat passenger bolts from the car, dropping a gun as he flees. The recruits let him go, as they have learned to do, in order never to separate from their partners.

"I want to know why I'm being stopped, officer," whines the driver again, looking back over his shoulder. "Look away from me, look the opposite way!" shouts a recruit. "Why, officer?" the driver whines. The four recruits are now standing in front of their car with their guns trained on him. "This is f—ing bulls—t," says the driver angrily. "Look away from me," commands the lead recruit. Another recruit shouts: "There's someone in the backseat!" A man who had been lying down in the back of the Chevy leaps out and shoots the recruits.

Fortunately, this time the perpetrators are played by police officers, and their guns aren't loaded. The recruits have just had a tough lesson in cover, the most important tactical strategy in policing. The first passenger ran from the car to lure the officers after him, thereby providing an easy target for the hidden gunman. The recruits responded properly by staying put, though they should have transmitted the runner's description over the radio. But they then left the cover of their car to approach the suspicious Chevy, making them vulnerable. They should have stayed behind cover, called for backup, and made the driver exit with his hands up, to be cuffed next to the patrol car. Ideally, armored personnel from emergency services could then approach the car at a wide angle to check the seats.

People often think of police tactics as sharpshooter ploys. The opposite is the case. Proper tactics frequently can eliminate the need for force altogether. The decisions an officer makes as he approaches a scene often determine the level of force he ends up having to use.

The NYPD's tactical mantra is "cover, concealment, and communication." The first two imperatives buy an officer time and protection to figure out the nature of the threat and the safest way of defusing it. The third imperative means: communicate with fellow officers, the suspect, and civilians. Failure of all three C's resulted in the death of Amadou Diallo. The four street-crime officers too quickly left the cover of their cars to approach Diallo's apartment vestibule; they had no apparent plan of action. Once they believed he was pointing a gun at them, they were fully exposed and had no recourse but to "shoot back," as they mistakenly, tragically, believed they were doing.

Some of the other In-Tac scenarios the recruits practiced that evening involved immediate levels of threat comparable to the hidden gunman exercise. Four recruits confronted a seeming robbery in progress: the "perpetrator," it turned out, was really a plainclothes street-crime cop frisking a suspect. When the street-crime officer put his gun on the ground—as the lead recruit, still uncertain of the "perp's" identity, had commanded him to do—the real perp grabbed it and shot the recruit. Another group of recruits are sent to a shooting outside a factory; the collapsing victim—a gang member, they later learn—pulls a gun from her jacket and pulls the trigger.

Other scenarios, however, call above all on officers' social skills to decipher and calm ambiguous situations, any one of which could in an instant turn dangerous. Among them:

- Students stopped a stolen car; its driver claimed to be its lawful owner. The officers frisked the driver, spread-eagled, while he shouted: "I went to John Jay [College of Criminal Justice], I know my rights, you cannot do this!" Turns out he was telling the truth: he had just recovered the car from the stolen-vehicles depot, but the department had failed to put the transaction into the computer. The challenge became how to mollify a very angry man. "Oh, you gotta be super-nice," suggested an eager-beaver recruit. "Maybe assist him getting back on the highway."
- Recruits walked into a hysterical dispute involving a woman and two men. As the novice officers eventually pieced together out of the swirl of emotions, a ne'er-do-well living with his sister had allegedly stolen $300 from her; to complicate matters, the siblings' older brother, also on the scene, was an off-duty cop.

"Where's my money?" screams the sister, as the recruits arrive.

"He wants to be a big s—t, officer; he never pays the rent," announces the older brother. "He's disrespecting my sister with naked girls in the bathroom." The older brother shouts at his sibling: "Is this a wake-up call for you yet? You're not embarrassed by this?"

A recruit pulls the moocher away from his sister. "Oh, you're going to take my wallet, sir? I don't appreciate being pushed," shouts the alleged thief.

"You hear that? He says he's going to hit me!" calls out the older brother. "Lock him up, officer, do me a favor!" he adds.

"You're calling me a f—king idiot? *You're* a f—king idiot!" retorts the younger brother.

After the scene ends, the supervising sergeant asks: "We're not here to make fun of you, but who was in control?" The older brother, came back the answer. The sergeant offered some tactics for controlling disputes: put the complainants back to back so they can't see each other and so you can see your partner; use code words if you're going to arrest someone, so as not to provoke early opposition; and above all, your first question, once you learn someone is a cop, should be: "Where's your weapon?"

- Other recruits tried to get an emotionally disturbed man who was out on the highway flapping his arms to get back into his sister's car.
- A solo officer was called to a loud argument between the owner of a bodega and rowdies playing football and drinking beer outside her store. "You're fine when we're spending money, Carol; what's the big deal, I can't play football?" threatens one. The rowdies surround the officer, shouting at him. "Call your lawyer, Tony," one guy says. "I know he needs a warrant." One tough hurls the football on the ground toward the officer and storms off.

The In-Tac lieutenant, Thomas Messer, advises the recruits afterward: "You cannot let your temper take you. They'll know if they can get to you; be very careful not to get hooked." Several years ago, he reminds them, "someone threw a football, and now an officer is in jail for murder" [referring to Officer Francis Livoti, who was alleged to have choked Anthony Baez to death in 1994 after Baez's football hit Livoti's car; Livoti was acquitted of homicide but convicted of federal civil rights violations].

To listen to police critics, you would think that officer training consists of constant exhortations to aggression. In fact, the Academy incessantly preaches that "professional presence" and professional language are an officer's most important law-enforcement tools, not force or threats. State troopers are figures of awe for so flawlessly embodying "professional presence." Detective Tony Augusto, the most charismatic instructor I came across, asks a large lecture hall: "Who's ever been pulled over by a state trooper? What did he look like?" "Very professional," came the recruits' answer. Augusto agrees: "They're ready to rock and roll. Interesting, interesting. Let's take a look at that. Once the hat's on, you know they mean business. Do they walk to your car? No, they *glide*. You can almost hear the 'Left! Right!'" he intones like a drill sergeant. "I'm a cop, and I'm intimidated. What do you think his first words are? 'Good evening, sir.' If you're pulled over by New York City cops, you're not quite greeted the same way."

The Academy faces a delicate challenge: while it constantly urges empathetic communication with

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the community, it also needs to turn often shy civilians into officers who are not embarrassed to assert their authority. "We're New York City officers. Guess what will happen out there," asks In-Tac instructor James Foiles, an intense, bronzed sergeant with a face as sharp as a razor blade. "Sanitation trucks will be going by, helicopters buzzing overhead. You will have to be loud and articulate. If you're timid, that's out. If you say,"—and here Foiles switches into a soft, mincing voice— "'Excuse me, sir, can you please put your hands on the wall?' no one will listen. Rather: 'Sir! Please put your hands up!'" he barks out.

Back at the Academy, four recruits are practicing a gun run (a response to a 911 call alleging an illegal gun). They weakly try to persuade the suspect to take his suspicious hand out of his pocket, while the suspects' buddies swarm around, adding to the confusion. "Freeze!" bellows Lt. Grace Telesco, the head of the Behavioral Sciences Department, to stop the scenario. "How do you get the man in the white shirt to get his hands out?" she asks the class—the most daunting question in police work. "The officers here are so laid back, I'd never comply," she snorts. "You have to command in such a way that you're scaring him to death. I know that we're always talking about communication, but to be assertive in this situation is not to be discourteous."

The most inspiring class I observed at the Academy brilliantly addressed this thorny problem of persuading people to obey justified commands. Since 1995, the Academy has taught "verbal judo," a set of verbal steps for talking people into compliance. Tony Augusto, with his long face, diamond ear stud, and hair that starts short on top and ends up curling over his collar, *Saturday Night Fever*–style, turns the lesson into an extraordinary exploration of how to police humanely.

Augusto's organizing theme is the distinction between the "asshole" and the "professional." The asshole officer confuses his ego with his role as enforcer of the law. "It's not about us," he admonishes the class, pacing the hall in a coffee-colored shirt, blue tie, and pleated trousers. "You are not the message. You put someone in handcuffs because *they've* broken the law, not because *you're* the police." Augusto puffs his chest out, rocks back and forth on the balls of his feet, and chuckles gloatingly in perfect asshole style: " 'Cuz *I'm* the police! Heh, heh, heh.'" He continues severely: "That comes from those three letters I despise, 'EGO.' No one cares that you're the police. When your ego flares up, your power and influence will decrease."

Augusto provides examples aplenty of the "disease of assholism" that afflicts too many officers. "'Why am I here? Because your wife called me! Sit the f—k down!'" he shouts self-righteously, in imitation of an unprofessional officer on a domestic-violence call. He winces and shakes his head. "Horrible, horrible. You'll have a fight on your hands if you tell a man to sit down in his own home."

> **"'You may have to slam someone down and put him in cuffs. That doesn't mean you have to strip him of his dignity.'"**

The professional knows how to deflect verbal abuse without escalating a confrontation. "When someone comes up to you: 'Oh, go f—k yourself, officer, I ain't doin' s—t,' your response can't be, 'Oh, go f—k myself?!'" Augusto retorts menacingly. "When we got sworn in, we lost one constitutional right. Which one? Freedom of speech. Our mouths keep getting us in trouble."

The goal of policing, Augusto keeps reminding the class, is to generate voluntary compliance. Period. As long as someone does what you tell him to, give him the last word. Doing otherwise will lead to disaster. "Don't be surprised if you hear this on the street: 'I'll do it this time, man, but if you didn't have that shield, I'd kick your ass!'" Augusto is talking over his shoulder, gesticulating angrily, while walking toward the door in imitation of a resentful civilian. "Who wants to call him back?" he asks the class about his imaginary miscreant. "He complied with a bad what? A bad attitude. What do we want to key in on, attitude or behavior? His attitude can't hurt us. I've never been knocked on my butt by a man's attitude." Augusto goes into asshole mode again: "'That man needs an attitude adjustment,'" he announces pompously. Severely now: "Remember that you can't change a man's attitude; you can't beat it out of him."

Seasoned cops don't like this teaching, Augusto says. He imitates an angry cop whose authority has been challenged: "'Hey, you! You!'" he spits out, calling back the imaginary perp for a lesson. "Gentlemen, get that tough-guy thing out of your head. It will put you in jail."

Augusto's is more than a negative philosophy, however. He just as vigorously counsels affirmative respect, even for criminals. You'll have toughs in your neighborhood who think they're even tougher than they actually are, he tells the class. Treat them with respect. "You may have to slam someone down and put him in cuffs. That doesn't mean you have to strip him of his dignity. The people you lock up may save your ass one night, when your backup doesn't arrive."

How do you get voluntary compliance from a thug? "You'll use this," Augusto predicts: "'Things can be done the easy way or the hard way; we prefer the easy way.' I can't tell you how many times I've said to a perp: 'Put your hands behind your back, act like a gentleman, and you'll be treated like a gentleman.' Remember, at any moment it can go south. Even though I'm acting like a gentleman, what's going on in my mind? Preparedness."

Augusto's most uplifting message would transform the NYPD if it were universally followed. "Bring your humanness to this job, bring your personality," he says. "Don't be afraid to greet people. People are scared to say hello to us," he laments, "because we usually just walk on by."

Professional presence and professional use of words won't always work, unfortunately. "Will we always get voluntary compliance?" Augusto queries. "No," the class pipes up. He continues philosophically as he walks the hall: "However, we *will* get compliance—yes, yes, we will; as long as we're within our legal rights. If you get physical," Augusto coolly advises, "I expect you to go fast, go hard, just push them into the system, and go from there."

Police critics who seem to believe that the job can be done without force would be horrified by the plainclothes class in "subject control." Paired off on tumbling mats, officers in gym clothes practice martial-arts tactics for taking down noncompliant suspects. "If he's fighting, grab his left arm," loudly orders Wilfredo Torres, a pit-bull-compact officer in a polo shirt. "Don't hit him in the triceps or back—it will only tick him off. Hit him in the elbow to cause pain. Push down on his arm with your forearm and pull up his wrist, then go into the hammerlock [the finishing technique for handcuffing a prone suspect]. You can't get him down nonchalantly; you need a little pain all the way down. And give loud, clear verbal commands: 'Down! Down! Down!'"

The Academy necessarily teaches force options all the way up what it calls the "compliance continuum" through deadly force. At the same time, however, it immerses recruits in the service ethic. Policing, it stresses constantly, is about serving people. Classes on various needy populations such as the handicapped are filled with a palpable sense of humanitarian mission. In a discussion on the elderly, instructor Kevin Parker warned the recruits that, because older people's routines are so predictable, "everyone is watching them"—sometimes with larcenous intent. "So who else should be watching?" he asked. As one, the recruits rang out: "We should!"

The NYPD has evolved a complete blueprint for courteous, professional policing. Instructors insist—more obsessively than the NYPD's critics—that officers get to know people on their beat and treat them considerately. Where problems arise, it is usually because someone has violated Augusto's verbal-judo philosophy. He has allowed his ego into the job or, as In-Tac's Lieutenant Messer put it, has gotten "hooked."

Had Justin Volpe obeyed verbal-judo mandates, he would not have taken a toilet plunger to Abner Louima. That incident was a textbook excessive-force case, triggered as it was by a challenge to an officer's authority. Louima had scuffled with Volpe and resisted arrest outside a Brooklyn nightclub; Volpe taught him the proverbial cop's lesson in the most grotesque way imaginable.

To prevent such atrocities, the NYPD needs to devote every discretionary training hour to communication and self-control. It needs to increase role-playing exercises across the range of situations officers confront, from violently hostile to sympathetic. Instead, in the wake of the Louima attack, the NYPD took a far more politically expedient course. It increased "diversity training," validating the NYPD-bashers' claim that the Louima case was a bias incident. The evidence showed otherwise. Volpe was engaged to a black woman; their families socialized enthusiastically. Told of Volpe's likely role in the Louima torture, Volpe's fiancée exclaimed to the *Daily News*: "Justin a racist? Impossible!" Another officer involved in the assault, Thomas Wiese, was also engaged to a black woman, who was the mother of his son. Rather than race, the Louima case was about something far more difficult to solve: officers who treat resistance as a personal affront.

Imposing the distorting prism of race on more complex problems is a national compulsion, however: so the NYPD adopted the misguided recommendations of a post-Louima mayoral task force on police-community relations. The task force called on the department, in cringe-inducing language, to create a "safe space," where students could acknowledge their prejudices and answer such pressing policing questions as "What is racism, sexism, anti-semitism, and homophobia? what is the difference between prejudice/bias and racism? What is discrimination, oppression, privilege, stereotyping? And what is diversity?"

It wasn't as if the NYPD didn't already put officers into a "safe space" to discuss their racism. The department had created the first police diversity training in the country in the 1970s; in 1991, the then-head of the Police Academy, Elsie Scott, said that she would devote a "large chunk" of academy training to diversity issues, since many recruits come from Staten Island (read: "white Staten Island") and therefore "have stereotypes about the communities, especially black and Hispanic communities, and . . . can't distinguish between potential victims and potential criminals."

The 1998 Louima task force scoffed at the Scott-created diversity materials. So current Academy director James O'Keefe brought in Grace Telesco, a police lieutenant and Ph.D. candidate in social work, to make sure that "cultural-sensitivity issues" would get even more emphasis—and in their most up-to-the-minute guise.

Friendly and refreshingly unguarded, with a tough edge when necessary, Telesco remade the "cultural-competence" track of the Behavioral Sciences Department (which also offers such critical courses as verbal judo) into a simulacrum of today's politicized, race-obsessed universities, even down to brandishing her own sexual orientation as if it were a job qualification. The always cash-strapped recruits are required to shell out $38 for *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*, a collection of resentment-filled essays edited by radical feminist Paula Rothenberg. Therein they read about the globally catastrophic effects of America's racism ("pervasive in the U.S. culture to the point that it deeply affects all the local town folk and spills over, negatively influencing the fortunes of folk around the world"); America's oppression of Asian-Americans ("Whites would deny us our right to speak out against majority prejudice, particularly because it tarnishes their image of Asians as 'model' minorities"); and its capitalist cruelty toward the poor, women, unwed mothers, the homeless, homosexuals, Jews, and blacks. Such cruelty, suggests a Rothenberg essayist, exceeds anything imaginable in other countries, including China, Algeria, India, and Brazil.

The recruits spend hours discussing and watching films on racism, sexism, homophobia, transgendered communities, and discrimination against the poor. They study a chart listing the various "privileges" that certain oppressor groups enjoy, such as being able-bodied, young, wealthy, or male. Students then break up into small groups to figure out how they themselves oppress or suffer oppression. "It really clicks for them when they realize that they're not afforded privileges because of class," beams Telesco. In discussing white privilege, they often make such telltale disclaimers as "'I'm not racist,'" all the while "making racist statements," she says.

I ask Telesco if the recruits also discuss black racism. She looks at me as if I have announced that I intend to fly out the window. "Of course there is no such thing as black racism," she replies, flabbergasted at my ignorance. As experts such as the lesbian feminist poet Audre Lord proclaim, she says, "racism is power and prejudice," so blacks by definition can't be racist. Tell that to Korean and Jewish store owners, Chinese delivery men, and Mexicans working in fast-food restaurants in Harlem—all of whom these recruits will be responsible for protecting once they get out on the street.

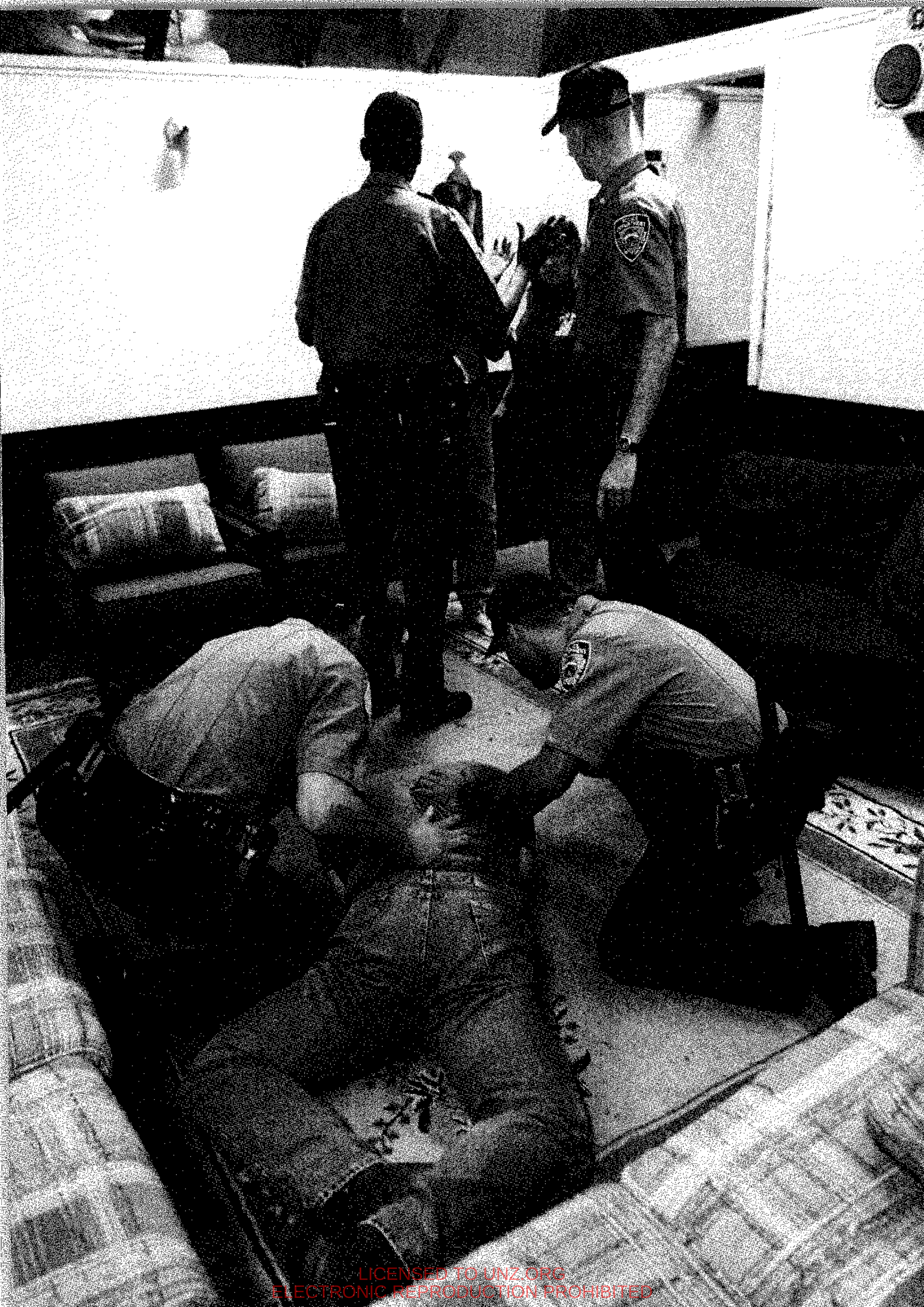
Telesco is fiercely proud of the "cultural-competence" curriculum. "This is radical stuff," she boasts, quite accurately. "This is about oppression: how there's an oppressor and an oppressed." She chafes at the fact that such left-wing critics of the police as WBAI radio and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission have not given the department credit for its "progressive" curriculum. From her point of view, she has every reason to be upset.

Like former Academy director Elsie Scott's diversity training, the cultural-competence curriculum assumes that recruits come into the department with deep-seated biases. To an eye less practiced in spotting racism and sexism, however, the recruits seem among the most well-meaning and unprejudiced people one could hope for. Unfailingly polite, they speak eagerly about their desire to help others. Their companies are models of racial harmony, with constant bear hugs and joking across race and sex lines. Race is not an issue, recruits told me (though that disclaimer of course would not satisfy expert racism-spotters like Telesco and Scott), and company diversity is a source of pride for members. "The most helpful diversity training in the academy is having been thrown in with the other 34 members of my patrol," says a willowy and thoughtful recruit named Richard Aspinwall. "I've never started a class with people so friendly."

So good-natured are the recruits that they take the Academy's anti-racism onslaught without a peep of protest. If asked, they will ingenuously volunteer that it was "taught like we're at fault because of the way we're born," as one recruit put it. But the white-bashing did not create any long-standing animosities, they say, and the companies thereafter go back to their prior color-blind state.

Seasoned cops are not so docile. Anyone who has ever gagged at the inanities of diversity training should wrangle a seat in the Academy's annual cultural-sensitivity "in-service training" session for plainclothes cops. There, for maybe the only time in one's life, one may witness victims of diversity training with enough guts to fight back.

The plainclothes cultural-sensitivity course was born out of another of the NYPD's politically motivated misdiagnoses. After the Diallo shooting, the NYPD's critics blamed endemic police racism for



the Diallo tragedy. They were wrong; the Diallo shooting represented bad tactics, period. But the department caved in to the critics' pressure and carved out an entire precious day for extra plainclothes training to accommodate yet another diversity class. Like the Louima-inspired revamping of the recruit curriculum, the cultural-sensitivity course is wildly irrelevant to the real problems of policing.

The Academy's sensitivity trainers play the time-tested diversity game of Gotcha: they require the hapless trainees to cough up cultural "stereotypes," then triumphantly point to the stereotypes they have elicited as evidence of cultural insensitivity. "Tell me about Italians," urged the trainer. On it went through New York's different ethnic groups. For a while, the cops played along ironically. Puerto Ricans? "Throw a great parade." "Love those hubcaps." Cubans? "Fit a lot of people in a small boat." Dominicans? "Like flags." Irish? "I don't know: white trash." What's the definition of white trash? "Trailer parks." There followed an agonizing discussion of whether New York City has trailer parks.

When the trainer asked for stereotypes about blacks, silence descended. Why is that? the trainer asked, disingenuously. No one volunteered an answer. Finally a few officers threw out: "all brothers"; "good basketball players"; "love that weed." Frustrated by the waning response to all her ethnic prompts, the trainer prodded: "C'mon, what are you guys saying about these people when you drive around?" Silence. "I'd rather you be out in the open; what scares me is when you're quiet," she pushed, with the compulsive demand for self-exposure typical of today's culture.

Showing far more wisdom than any diversity trainer ever manifests, a lieutenant suggested: "Things that come into the open create problems. The media is always putting microphones in people's faces, making problems for everyone."

Undaunted, the trainer offered some examples of American racism to get things going again. Street names in the Southwest, she said portentously (and inaccurately), are Anglo, rather than Indian or Spanish. No one understood this subtle point. "What's wrong with that?" asked a cop innocently. Countered she: "Did John or Mary build that town?" A stocky, tattooed Puerto Rican in a head scarf bluntly replied: "It's now America."

Pay dirt! Isn't that racism? the trainer asked victoriously. The cops would have none of it. "No, racism's the opposite." "They're starting something new; the past is all over." Though most officers remain unapologetically committed to assimilation, the concept is too dangerous for the NYPD. Following the Louima incident, the Academy removed all references to assimilation in its cultural-diversity training materials.

> **"'All we hear is that we're racially profiling. I can't stand the media,' spat out a black street-crime officer."**

It was time to return to the script. "Unfortunately, stereotypes are usually negative. Very few of you give me the good end of it," the trainer said sorrowfully. This was blatantly false. The officers had cheerfully been throwing out idiotic "good" and idiotic "bad" ethnic tags with exquisite impartiality. But no one objected to her mischaracterization, and she arrived at her goal: "How do these stereotypes affect us when on we're on patrol?"

The joking was over. In an instant, the class became a microcosm of the debate about the police over the last two years—except this time, the cops got to talk back.

"Stereotypes don't affect me at all; a person is a person," asserted an officer.

Unsatisfied, the trainer tried the next officer: "How do they affect you?"

"I treat all people the same."

"Oh, so you treat everyone equally? You don't think this guy might have a gun or drugs because of his appearance?" she said sarcastically.

A rail-thin young undercover from Transit tried a quid pro quo: I'll give you your prejudice, you give me our professionalism. "I know guys who are 110 percent prejudiced, but everyone's still treated equally."

"I'd like to think that's the way it is," the instructor said, her voice heavy with skepticism.

"You don't think that's the way it is?" said a lieutenant from Queens, with considerable heat. "I've been 19 years on this job; I've never seen someone say, go get that 'X.'"

"I'm glad to hear that's the case."

A street-crime officer sought to break through the trainer's condescension. "You may go for dress, sex, age. If I'm looking for a perp, you're not looking for a guy in a suit. You stop someone because of what they're doing. You might find this is the nicest kid in world.... I say 'kid'; that's my prejudice," he said self-consciously, aware that everyone was supposed to be confessing to sin. (He needn't have been so self-critical. Males between the ages of 14 and 24, less than 8 percent of the population, commit almost half the nation's murders; black males of the same age, less than 1 percent of the population, committed some 30 percent of the country's homicides in the 1990s).

Here was something that the diversity trainer could work with. "Stereotypes can be anything—dress, as you say, or age. You'll stop a kid out there, looking like the typical perp."

A young sergeant in a Jamaica anti-crime unit tried to clarify: "Not one of us stops a kid just because he's wearing baggy clothes. If you see him raise his belt, then you may stop him."

Ever ready to instruct these seasoned street cops in their jobs, the trainer said brightly: "You know what? There are perps out there in a suit and tie, blond, blue-eyed."

Exasperated, the anti-crime sergeant said: "We're talking about violent crime!"

This sort of hard-nosed realism was unacceptable. Finally a large, walrus-mustachioed sergeant from Astoria blurted out: "I'm sorry, Donna, this is killing me. This is the second time we've sat through this class. This has nothing to do with cultural diversity. This is an insurance policy, because the media is saying we're all racists."

Now all hell broke loose, as two years of frustration over the press's caricature of the police boiled over. "All we hear is that we're racially profiling. I can't stand the media. They're a bunch of lying pigs," spat out a black Brooklyn street-crime officer who had refused to participate in the earlier inanities. "If I stop five black people, am I racially profiling? But if a white officer stops them, *now* it's race profiling!" he scoffed. "People forget that some guys are actually committing crimes." He added for good measure: "Since we're all fascists, and we like to beat everyone, why don't they bring a force from some other country, and let them patrol the streets."

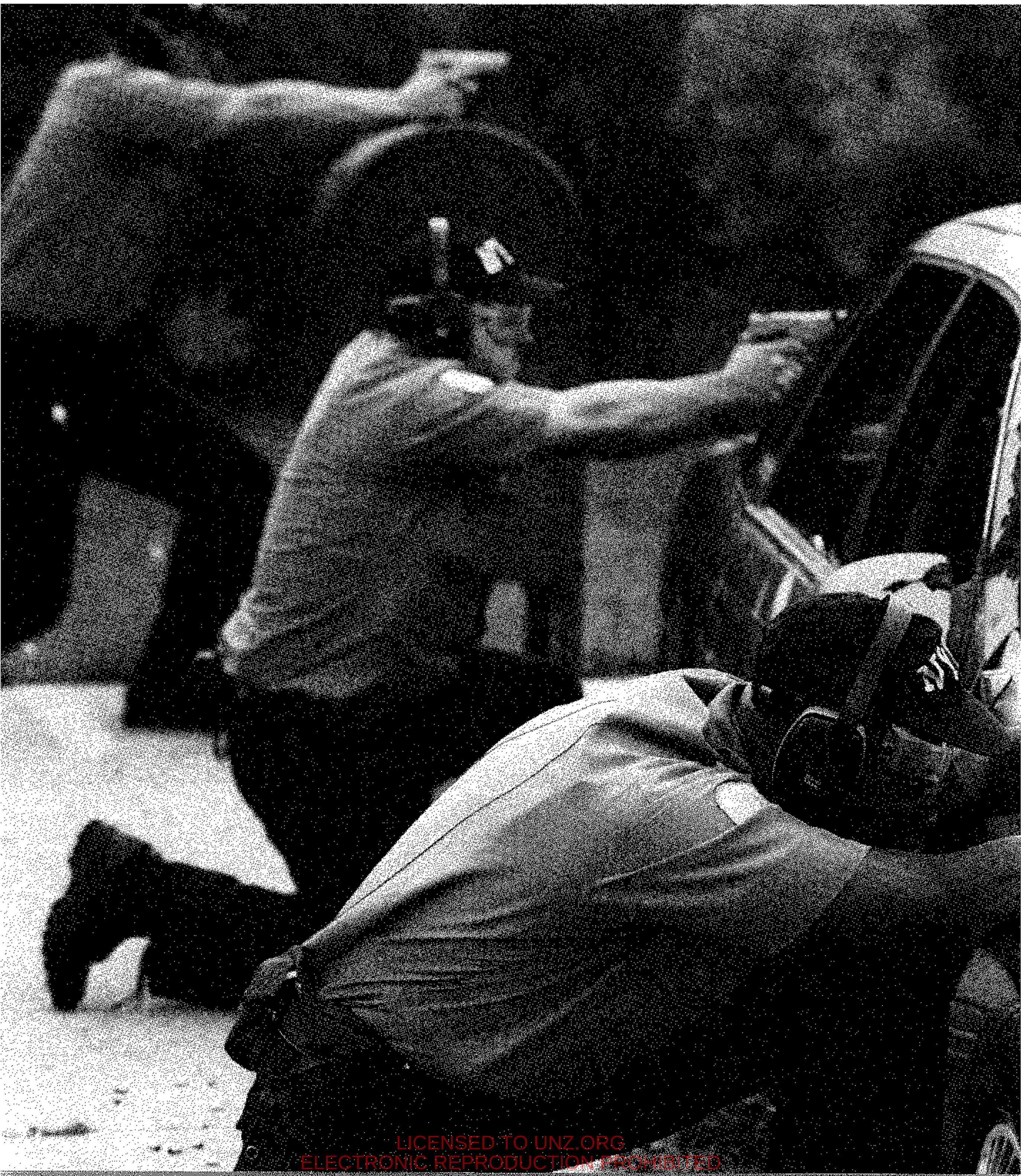
The anger flowed onto the Civilian Complaint Review Board, which cops universally loathe as an increasingly politicized body staffed by ignorant 21-year-olds. "Why don't the CCRB punks get thrown into the back of a patrol car, made to do verticals in housing projects, get trash thrown at them from roofs, and have people pull their wallets out fast at them to get them to react?" fumed another street-crime officer.

The trainer tried to contain the fury. "The public knows what you're going through," she said soothingly. "They have *no idea. None!*" shot back the bitter response.

The mustachioed sergeant from Astoria made a last effort to explain the police's perspective. "I've worked in every neighborhood in this city. My precinct is one of the most diverse. I don't look at people as black, green, orange, or red. You're either a good guy or a bad guy. If you're going to raise my suspicions, I'll act based on my level of suspicion."

The police are among the last groups in society willing to make this distinction between "good" and "bad" guys unapologetically and unambiguously. It is central to their worldview, tied up with their loathing of criminality and its effects on the law-abiding public. From their perspective, they are profiling "bad" guys, based on repeated observation. The public, however, sees only race.

Such exercises as the plainclothes cultural-sensitivity course are a colossal and outrageous waste of time. It cannot be overstated how scarce training time at the NYPD is. Taking officers off the street for any additional instruction always requires enormous justification, for it dilutes patrol strength. To spend those precious hours on childish identity politics bears a huge opportunity cost, for the time could be spent on instruction—above all, training in communication skills—that would actually improve officer performance. Tony Augusto's wonderful verbal-judo lecture, after all, was just that—a lecture. The recruits had little opportunity that morning to try the communi-



cation techniques he advocated. The force would benefit infinitely more if it devoted the hours wasted on discussing white privilege to role-playing exercises about how to subdue hostile civilians with words alone, a challenge officers confront on a daily basis.

Academy director James O'Keefe, a broad-faced, savvy former cop, defends the diversity nonsense by saying recruits inevitably bring society's problems with them to the Academy, including racism and sexism. This response sidesteps a more complicated and pressing issue: the job pressures and peer culture that can turn the most well-meaning officers into sullen discredits to the profession. Reality, not racism, is the biggest challenge for the police.

The enthusiasm with which most recruits begin their training wanes after only a few years on the streets. Police are lied to, betrayed, and cursed at by the people they are trying to help; they see communities close ranks around criminals; they are called into scenes of utter depravity. O'Keefe knows this full well. "There is a very complex erosion of the human spirit that goes on in policing," he says. "Good people are exposed to bad things constantly. Officers start to ask whether the job is even doable."

That's why officers who started out with the best attitude sometimes end up with the most civilian complaints against them, observes Mike Caruso, a beloved precinct commander in Harlem and the Bronx, now in the anti-corruption Internal Affairs Bureau. They cared too much, he recalls, and couldn't accept failure. " 'I told you guys to leave this corner,' " they'll erupt angrily, provoking retaliatory complaints from drug dealers resentful of the interference. Add to street stress a hostile press and the perception of low pay, and you have a recipe for exceedingly low morale, tinged with the rage expressed in the plainclothes diversity course.

Each Academy class vows to avoid this cynicism and apathy. As the new recruits lined up outside a store in Flatbush this spring to pick up their uniforms, passersby shouted: " 'All you white boys go back to Long Island!' " and " 'We don't need you here; f—k the police!' " recalls Robert Coppola, an upbeat 22-year-old. "You just gotta laugh at it," he says amicably. It doesn't happen only in minority neighborhoods: two days later, Coppola recounts, a couple of middle-aged businessmen on the Metro-North train told him, " 'Oh, you're a cop? You should petition people to show you their hands, so you don't kill them.'" "I had to laugh," he smiles, shaking his head.

Coppola acknowledges that "some guys get a little disillusioned after a few years," but he tries not to listen to them. "I don't think I'll get that way," he asserts.

Making sure Coppola and others like him retain their positive attitude should be a top priority of police training, both in the Academy and throughout an officer's career. Director O'Keefe plans an excellent program to counter the corrosion of the streets: he will bring all officers back to the Academy at their fifth year for a week of retraining, including discussion groups on stress, alcoholism, and suicide. But he could accomplish much more with a yearly debriefing to help officers cope with the onslaught of negativity they receive. All hours currently spent on sensitivity training for in-service officers should be pooled to try to make annual debriefing possible. These sessions should acknowledge the one true race-related challenge in urban policing, discussion of which is now taboo: the vastly disproportionate representation of minorities among criminals. Every officer I have ever spoken to maintains the credo that the worst parts of the city house far more "good" people than "bad." The work required to hold on to that truth during constant enforcement activity should be frankly addressed.

The question of how to train policemen is where Plato begins his account of the ideal state in *The Republic,* the book with which Western political philosophy begins. Here in the real world, the NYPD, which inducts thousands more officers into the force each year than most departments in the country see in decades, has crafted an impressive practical answer to the question. Its instruction program includes the reality-based, hands-on training that is the best preparation for the split-second decision making officers face in the streets. In addition, its teachers hammer home the ideal of service and professionalism at every possible opportunity. As it works to improve its already fine training, the department should focus obsessively on increasing officers' communication skills. Those, and not the diversity training that insults officers' intelligence and experience, are the real keys to bringing the city closer to the Platonic ideal of enlightened policing.

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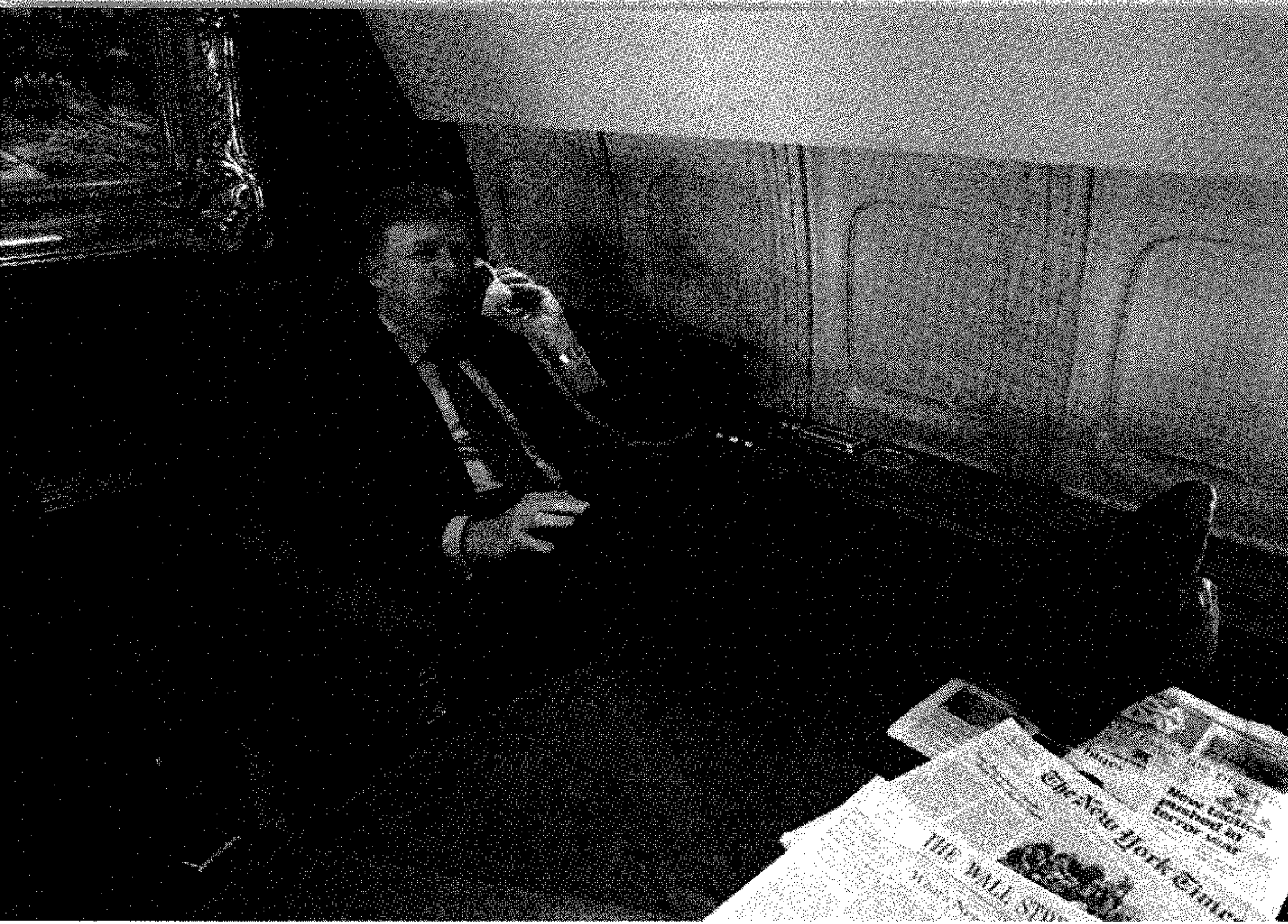


Why Gotham's Developers Don't Develop

Kafkaesque regulations have turned builders into a cartel of political wheeler-dealers. The result: an economy-dampening shortage of offices and apartments in New York.

William J. Stern

A flurry of recent news stories report that a scarcity of apartments and office space is putting a damper on New York City's ebullient economy. Businesses are having trouble hiring skilled help because out-of-town candidates balk at the high rents and hard-to-find apartments. Some companies, unable to find office space to expand in Gotham, are leaving town. One explanation the papers have offered for the space shortage—that the booming economy has used up the city's available land—is laughable, as anyone knows who has recently taken a drive around Manhattan, let alone the rest of the city. Practically within walking distance of midtown, you'll find whole swatches of derelict property, crying out for development.

So if Gotham hasn't run out of physical space, why aren't its developers—whose forebears erected the Empire State Building in only 13 months—responding to the city's real-estate crunch? To get

Real estate operator Donald Trump summed up the developers' credo in his book title: *The Art of the Deal*.

RICHARD DREW/AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTO

an answer, just look at today's New York developer. He's not Ayn Rand's Howard Roark, balancing heroically on a steel beam high above the sidewalk, urging his construction crew to work harder, faster. He's a political wheeler-dealer, whose principal activity is perfectly summed up in the almost self-parodying title of Donald Trump's book: *The Art of the Deal*.

Of course, he can't help being a wheeler-dealer if he wants to build in the city. That's because complying with New York's Kafkaesque zoning code and its banana-republic process for approving building projects requires first and foremost a Herculean exercise in politics. It is hugely time-consuming and very expensive, not only because time is money, but because a developer has to schmear people, both publicly and sometimes not so publicly, every step of the way. One high-powered city developer put it bluntly: "You have to be a conniver to get things done."

Old-time New York builders had the luxury of working under the simple, 35-page zoning code of 1916, which, in urbanist Alan Ehrenhalt's words, "concentrated on giving some stability and order to what was already there and resolving the most serious problems in the least intrusive way possible." Under its rules, for example, you couldn't build a slaughterhouse in a pleasant residential neighborhood, but you *could* build housing anywhere in the city, and you could build anything you wanted in certain unrestricted areas. To prevent New York from becoming a city of shadows, your building had to get thinner as it rose higher, producing the familiar wedding-cake architectural style of the Empire State Building and other period edifices. Otherwise, real estate was in the market's creative hands.

Under this code, handsome new buildings shot up at a feverish rate—a remarkable one per working hour during the 1920s boom, according to a *Valentine's Manual* from the time. In 1927, developers built *90,000* new housing units. Nowadays, Gotham throws a party if 10,000 new units go up in a year, when it really needs 40,000 a year to replace crumbling older buildings and to keep pace with the influx of new immigrants. Most of today's new units are luxury apartments. Not so under the 1916 code: "Back then, my grandfather erected buildings in which the people who worked on them could afford to live in them," says Mark Perlbinder, a third-generation New York City developer.

Everything changed in 1961, however, when Mayor Robert Wagner and Faustian master builder Robert Moses imposed a new zoning code that swapped the market's invisible hand for the vision of central planners, dictating every jot and tittle of what a developer could build and where he could build it. Wagner's and Moses' key ideas seem crazy from the perspective of hindsight. At a time when New York manufacturing employment (much of it low-paying) was already beginning its long decline, they zoned whole sections of the city for manufacturing. Thinking that the city's population was growing too quickly, they forbade residential development in industrial and commercial parts of the city, so that great swathes of the five boroughs, including much of the precious waterfront, is off-limits to would-be builders of apartments or of offices for twenty-first-century businesses. And they wanted the city to embody the vision of the then-celebrated Swiss architect Le Corbusier—who favored giant, boxy towers isolated in big, open plazas—so they allowed builders to make their edifices taller, and so boost rental footage, if they set them back from the sidewalk and surrounded them with open space. These three principles they enshrined in a code of stupefying complexity. It established ten residential, eight commercial, and three manufacturing districts, with density restrictions that varied almost site by site within each one, creating a virtually impenetrable jungle of zones.

Residents of the city's neighborhoods were aghast at the overbearing glass towers and windswept plazas that the new code encouraged to shoot up next door to low-rise brownstones across New York. A neighborhood-led "counterrevolution," in current city-planning chief Joseph Rose's phrase, ensued. Over the last few decades, in response to this neighborhood outrage over the 1961 code, the city carved out an additional 38 special zoning districts from Bay Ridge to Little Italy. These districts have their own regulations, aimed at preserving the neighborhoods' architectural integrity. Layered onto the original, hypercomplex 1961 rules, the metastasizing regulations have helped swell the city's zoning code to 900-plus pages—as I discovered when Rose dropped them in front of me with a resounding thud during an interview.

This complexity transformed the builder into a political operator. To build within such a painstakingly detailed and constricting code, a developer almost inevitably had to request zoning changes. To get those changes, however, he had to appeal to the Department of City Planning and to top city officials, who could derail his project at any time. The late developer Seymour Durst, who began his career under the 1916 rules, complained 20 years ago about the arbitrariness of doing business under the new regime: "During the past ten years, the Planning Department has been the law and the law has been whatever suited the fancy of city planners." To be successful, a builder now had to make sure he was on the right side of government bureaucrats.

To make matters even worse, beginning in the mid-seventies, the developer now had to go through a heavily politicized process for approving any building proposal that needed re-zoning—in other words, almost any significant proposal. Called the Unified Land Use Review Process (ULURP), it forces the builder to seek level after level of city-government approval before getting a final pass on his project. One real-estate lawyer likens it to "a Minotaurian maze"—take a wrong turn and you're dead.

The ULURP completed the transformation of the builder into the politician. True, at the lower levels of the process—the neighborhood community boards and borough president—the opinions offered on a proposal are only advisory. But higher-level city officials sometimes pay attention to them, so the developer can't ignore them. And once you get past the lower levels, the city planners, the City Council, and the mayor all have the power to scuttle a project. The whole process forces the developer to devote most of his energy for about eight months to making politicians happy instead of getting steel riveted and bricks mortared.

Thanks to a 1976 state law, the developer must also submit his proposal (if it requires re-zoning) to the most exhaustive environmental review in the nation, which typically takes 18 months to complete. It looks at a project's potential impact on everything from population concentration and noise to smog and endangered species. The review, or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), is as costly to the developer in consulting and legal fees as it is time-consuming. Says environmental lawyer Michael Gerrard, "A good-size EIS will cost several hundred thousand dollars, but it could be more than a million."

A developer needs not just the political skills of Boss Tweed but also lots of up-front cash to negotiate this labyrinth. Say you want to build a luxury apartment complex in Manhattan on an abandoned plot. First, you'll need to find out whether zoning changes are in order. "No longer can an architect look at the zoning map and tell you exactly what you can build on it," complained developer Joel Banker a while back. If you need changes, as is likely—the Department of City Planning will let you know for sure—you'll need to get the ball rolling on the expensive environmental review.

To get through the ULURP, you'll need to make massive contributions to mayoral and city council political campaigns, supporting Democrats, Republicans, and even minor-party candidates to give you the necessary political clout. "It is uncomfortable," New York developer Douglas Durst said in 1998 of the constant contributions he had to be handing out. "What goes on in my head is, what happens if I say no?" Not many New York developers seem willing to risk it. They are the top political contributors in the city, outpacing even trial lawyers and public-sector unions.

You'll have to lobby like crazy, too. Ten of the top 14 biggest spenders lobbying city hall in 1999 were looking for zoning changes and approval on building proposals for their clients. It's not just the mayor's office and the City Council you'll need to win over. You'll have to hire a "liaison" to the relevant community board—usually a political insider who'll make the right phone calls—and wage a pricey public-relations campaign to convince wavering board members that your luxury apartments are a good idea. You will need the borough president's help as well. "That means I have to hire an attorney on good terms with the president's office and work my way through," says one prominent developer.

Without the right legal help, you haven't got a chance. "You have to know who to hire and when to hire them," a senior Giuliani administration official tells me. New York's post-1961 zoning regime and review process has spawned a small industry of high-priced lawyers and lobbyists, often former government officials, who know how to find zoning loopholes and "expedite" the approval process. Speaking to the *New York Times*, big-league attorney Sandy Lindenbaum described what he does for Gotham builders. "They don't need me to call the mayor," he said. "But if what they need is a change in zoning, you don't call the mayor—so they call me."

> **"Ten of the top 14 biggest spenders lobbying city hall in 1999 were looking for zoning changes and approval on building proposals."**

If Lindenbaum's forte is zoning, other lawyers specialize in persuading politicians to sign off on a builder's proposal. John Zuccotti (in the Koch years), Sid Davidoff (in the Dinkins years), Ray Harding (today)—all are political insiders who act as premium escort services to developers to guide them through the city's real-estate bureaucracy.

In exchange for their backing in the approval process, the politicians get to impose conditions on the big developer. Sometimes the conditions are highly unsavory. Community board members "are often in business," says one builder. He recalls a Manhattan board member who offered developers a deal: he'd give his thumbs up on their building proposals if they gave his advertising firm some business.

On other occasions, the developer must publicly agree to bankroll the politician's pet causes. To get then-borough president Ruth Messinger on board for his Riverside South development project on Manhattan's West Side, Donald Trump had to promise to set aside for low-income residents 10 percent of the luxury apartments he wanted to build and spend another $5 million sprucing up the 72nd Street subway station. The City Council piled on its own demands before giving Trump the okay: he'd have to cough up $500,000 on senior-citizen, youth, and job-training programs and agree to hire a quota of 20 percent women and minorities on the project. Where else in the nation would a developer have to agree to fund social services?

How far these agreements get honored is unclear. Such deals would require an efficient and talented bureaucracy to monitor the developer's compliance—something noticeably absent in New York. But the politician at least gets to announce that he's shaking down the rich developer for a "progressive" goal, while the developer gets the green light to build his apartments.

This political and regulatory rigamarole is a major reason building a high rise in New York costs 17 percent more than in nearby Jersey City and 31 percent more than in Atlanta, and that it takes five years to put up a structure that would take 18 months to build elsewhere in the region. There's a hidden cost, too, the authors of a recent New York University law school study claim: projects never get started because of the "chilling effect" New York's building climate has on builders. No wonder New York lacks office space and housing and that rents are so high.

Normally, you'd think builders would be waging an all-out battle to overturn the barriers that make it so hard to build in Gotham. But the major-league New York developers have learned how to thrive in this climate. They know which expensive lawyers to hire and how to get city officials on their side, and they've got enough money to wait the years and years it takes to see a project through and make a big profit. Many belong to what journalist David Samuels calls "the royal families" of New York City real estate: the Brodskys, Dursts, Roses, Rudins, Tishmans, and Trumps who've built in the city for decades. They're like Bolivian tin families, handing down the state-protected business, and all

Proving that no central planner can think of everything, the current zoning code, artfully manipulated, allowed Donald Trump to erect the 70-story monstrosity now rising on 47th Street.

the political connections it takes to flourish in it, from father to son, generation after generation.

In fact, this complex system has turned New York's big developers into a de facto cartel. The system keeps the competition out. It makes it hard for national developers and newcomers, who lack the political know-how and the right political connections, to get a foothold in the city. A senior Giuliani official puts it bluntly: "The present regulations operate as a barrier to entry, and some developers are doing well and don't want competitors." And if the developers don't want change, naturally the consultants, lawyers, lobbyists, and politicians who profit from the existing system don't want to get rid of it, either.

City-planning chief Joseph Rose (himself a member of one of the city's premier real-estate families) discovered the cartel's power when he recently tried to enact modest reforms of the zoning code. Rose's reforms would probably give the city better buildings—they restrict the sale of air rights that allowed Donald Trump to construct the massive eyesore now rising on 47th Street and First Avenue, for example—but they leave in place most of the irrational system governing construction. Yet the proposed changes still went nowhere. The Real Estate Board, an industry group that represents New York's leading builders, said the reforms were "the wrong way to go." A major city developer claims Rose never had a chance.

Not all developers oppose shaking things up, however. Two years ago, Douglas Durst and another city developer, Bruce Ratner, complained publicly about the need to make huge political contributions in order to construct anything in the city. Randy Lee, a veteran Staten Island builder, is fed up with dealing with politicians, too. "It's gotten to be too much," he maintains. Other builders, speaking anonymously for fear of antagonizing a key politician or regulator, also express disenchantment with the current system, but not enough to get them to call publicly for major changes that would break up the cartel.

> **"'The present regulations operate as a barrier to entry, and some developers are doing well and don't want competitors.'"**

True, changing the zoning rules and the real-estate approval process wouldn't by itself free New York's real-estate development industry from its shackles. After all, even the way the real-estate-tax system works is part of the politicized system. The big players of the cartel routinely negotiate special tax-cut deals. For newcomers, who haven't got the knack of wrangling a tax abatement from the city, the practice is a further deterrent. If they built in New York, they would be competing with builders paying taxes at a lower rate.

Worse still, while government does what it *shouldn't* do with regulations and taxes, it doesn't do what any government *should* be doing: keeping criminals out of the construction industry. Stories on New York's mobbed-up construction unions and contractors have dominated headlines lately. Featherbedding, extortion, bid rigging, and other illegal and anticompetitive practices are common, adding a sizable mob tax to the price of construction that helps drive New York's building costs some 35 percent higher than the national average.

As if these problems weren't enough, New York's Buildings Department is notoriously corrupt and inefficient, making the permitting process an expensive, time-consuming headache. Builders often have to bribe department officials to ensure a favorable decision on their permit application, as if they were living in Latin America or the old Soviet Union, and they hire "runners" to stand in line for them at the department and do the stack of requisite paperwork. To its credit, the Giuliani administration has set up a task force to crack down on department corruption, though it will take a major effort in the remaining months of his administration to root it out. The administration has also moved toward putting permitting on line through the city's website to speed things up.

Serious concerns, for sure; but New York could go a long way toward making the developer a builder again instead of a politician by scrapping its current zoning code and replacing it with a new one modeled on the 1916 rules. The new code should be simple, so that builders don't need a zoning change every time they want to build, and it should restrict only egregious ugliness and incompatible uses. Such a reform would free developers from almost always having to go through the ULURP and the state-mandated environmental review, both of which kick in only when projects need zoning changes. It would return building decisions to the market instead of subjecting them to political control.

To adopt a new zoning code might seem a pie-in-the-sky idea, but other big cities, including Minneapolis and San Diego, have scrapped their old codes and started over during the last few years. New York could do it, too—though, given the fate of Rose's mild reforms, it would take truly determined political leadership to pull it off. If the city did adopt a simpler code, builders could again construct the bountiful housing and abundant offices that are signs of—and preconditions for—a living, economically vital city. ■

ED BAILEY/APWIDE WORLD PHOTO

Bring Back Stigma

Without it, we become a shameless society—with some disastrous consequences.

Roger Scruton

It is now orthodox to regard social stigma as a form of oppression, to be discarded on our collective quest for inner freedom. But the political philosophers and novelists of former times would have been horrified by such a view. In almost all matters that touched upon the core requirements of social order, they believed that the genial pressure of manners, morals, and customs—enforced by the various forms of disapproval, stigma, shame, and reproach—was a more powerful guarantor of civilized and lawful behavior than the laws themselves. Inner sanctions, they argued, more dependably maintain society than such external ones as policemen and courts. That is why the moralists of the eighteenth century, for example, rarely touched upon murder, theft, rape, or criminal deception; instead, they were passionately interested in the small-scale mores on which social order depends and which, properly adhered to, make such crimes unthinkable.

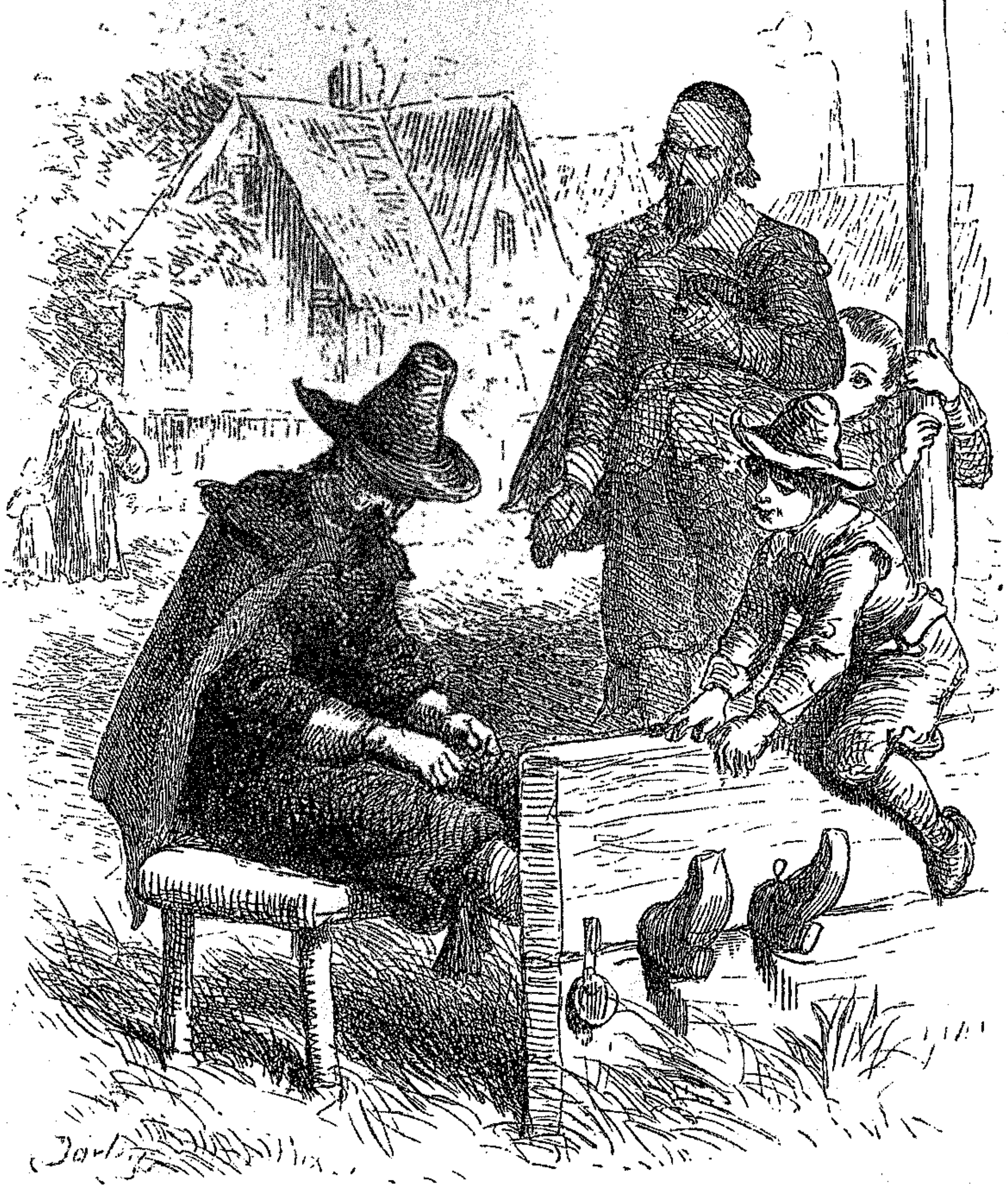
Stigma has evaporated in our era, and along with it much of the constant, small-scale self-regulation of the community, which depends on each individual's respect for, and fear of, other people's judgment. In consequence, the laws have expanded, both in extent and complexity, to fill the void. Yet as sanctions have been expropriated from society by the state, people feel far more free to follow their own inclinations, to disregard proprieties, and to ignore the effect of their behavior on others and on the common good. For although the law impinges far more on their lives, they experience it as an external force with no real moral authority. In addition, the law increasingly distinguishes the "public" realm, where it is the sole objective authority, from the "private" realm, where it cannot intrude, leaving the private realm less and less regulated, despite the fact that it contains most of the matters on which the future of society depends: sexual conduct, the rearing of children, honest dealing, and self-respect.

Moreover, there is no evidence that the law can really compensate for the loss of social sanctions. The law combats crime not by eliminating criminal schemes but by increasing the risk attached to them; stigma combats crime by creating people who have no criminal schemes in the first place. The steady replacement of stigma by law, therefore, is a key cause of the constant increase in the number and severity of crimes.

Half a century ago, anthropologist Ruth Benedict famously distinguished societies according to whether their citizens' inner lives were governed by shame or by guilt, the first directed outward to society, the second directed inward to the self. But this is a distinction without a difference, guilt being simply the inner residue of shame. Guilt is a learned response—an internalization of the disapproval, anger, and ostracism that parents, teachers, and neighbors direct toward the unruly child to mold his conscience. Guilt exists therefore only where people fear adverse judgment. The evidence from modern societies suggests that, where the community ceases to respond to moral faults with public sanctions, individuals cease to feel guilty about them, and conscience weakens. If we wish for inner sanctions to exist, we must back them up with sanctions of a more public and outward-going kind. Moral norms, generated collectively, must also be collectively imposed.

Sexual morality provides a particularly clear and important case in point. Sex is the bond of society and also the force that explodes it. Properly managed, sexual feelings lead to lasting marriages, stable families, children with vigilant parents, and the handing down from generation to generation of the precious store of social capital. Mismanaged, they lead to a society—perhaps one should say "society"—of casual encounters, jealousies, and aggressions, in which there are neither lasting commitments nor sacrifices on behalf of children.

Society makes sexual behavior a matter of conscience, thus regulating it more effectively. And this moralization of sexual feeling also transforms it, cre-

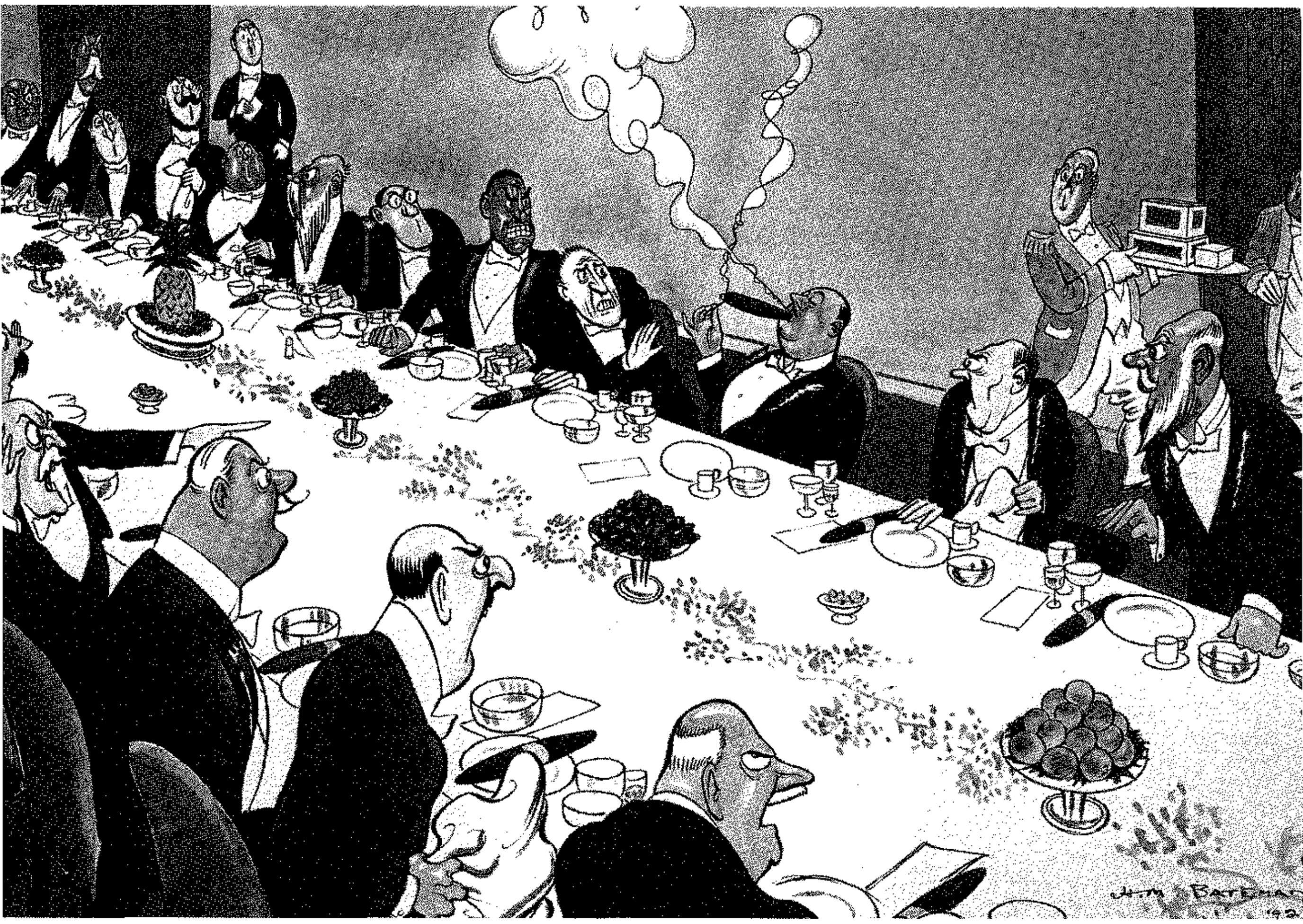


THE GRANGER COLLECTION

To the modern imagination, the disposition to maintain social norms through stigma and shame seems abhorrent, a form of bad behavior rather than a cure for it.

ating feelings which are not only uniquely human but vital to our happiness. Erotic love, in contrast with animal lust, requires distance and the overcoming of distance by passion. This distance does not exist in a society where sexual release is obtainable anywhere and from anyone without the penalty of guilt or shame, enforced through stigma and ostracism. By imbuing sexual feelings with psychological sanctions, traditional societies ensured that they were controlled by the person who feels them. As a result, sexual feelings were integrated into moral character, not governed from outside by laws and regulations, but from inside by the will. This inward control set people at a distance from one another; it also made them safe to one another by ensuring that sexual advances were not just smash-and-grab raids aimed at the goods in the window but the first steps toward love and commitment. Take this inner control away, and what was previously a source of social cohesion becomes the cause of social decay.

Long ago, societies recognized that they could not make adultery or out-of-wedlock childbearing into crimes without opening the way to intolerable injustices; Christ himself took the first step toward decriminalization when he ironically invited anyone who was without sin to begin stoning the woman



Social disapproval not only prevents such trivial faux pas as lighting up before the toast is made, but also it inhibits immoral actions that threaten society.

accused of adultery. Nevertheless, even as the law withdrew from these areas, the moral code remained, and communities were able to protect themselves from the sexual excesses that threatened their existence by stigmatizing those who indulged in them. Take away the stigma, and we are left with no socially accepted means for enforcing sexual morality.

This loss is especially significant now, as we begin to wake up to the damage that the collapse of marriage has inflicted on society. The stable, two-parent family no longer seems an eccentricity or a peculiarity of "bourgeois" society. Increasingly, we acknowledge it as the institution that secured the stability, harmony, and prosperity of Western societies and that enabled one generation to bequeath its culture and institutions to the next. Marriage was kept in place not by law but by stigma, which ensured that most babies, even if not conceived in wedlock, were at least born in it, thus enjoying the social acceptance and the parental nurture that children need if they are to grow up to be secure and decent citizens.

Of course, the stigmatization of illegitimacy had cruel side effects—not least upon the children ridiculed as "bastards." My grandfather was one of

HENRY MAYO BATEMAN (1887-1970), *THE MAN WHO LIT HIS CIGAR BEFORE THE ROYAL TOAST*/BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

them, and the stigma ensured that, like Richard III, he came into the world "determined to prove a villain"—a determination he amply fulfilled. But as James Q. Wilson and others have shown, the removal of illegitimacy's stigma, however kindly intended, has done nothing to improve the character and prospects of illegitimate children. Statistical studies of American prisoners, for example, show that illegitimacy is by far the most important factor in disposing children to a life of crime—more significant than IQ, race, culture, or any other factor investigated by the criminologists. The function of the stigma was to prevent people from reproducing in socially destructive ways. With stigma gone, more and more children are now born out of wedlock; and welfare support to single mothers makes it economically advantageous for young women to take this shortcut to reproductive success. This is a catastrophe in today's inner cities; in Britain, it will be a still bigger catastrophe in 20 years' time, when children born in wedlock will be in the minority.

> **"Take away the stigma, and we are left with no socially accepted means for enforcing sexual morality."**

The case is not very different with adultery. People of my parents' generation would not publicly confess to this transgression; if they committed it, they did so in secret. Known adulterers were the subject of malicious gossip, and never would they flaunt their passion in public. Politicians could still be shamed, and their careers ruined, if their adulterous liaisons came to light. Today, however, someone invited to a dinner party with his wife might turn up instead with his mistress—even a mistress whom nobody yet knows—without precipitating anything more than mild curiosity.

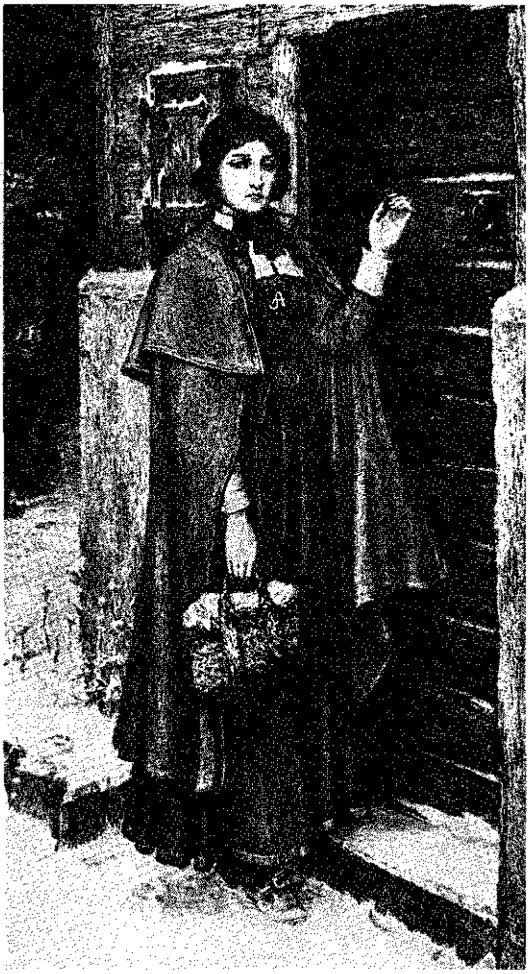
The effect on marriage is evident. In Britain, as in America, nearly half of all marriages now embarked on will end in divorce, and in the kind of polite society inhabited by our urban elite, marriage has no more legitimacy and invites no greater public respect than a casual liaison. Official documents have been revised to put "partner" in the place of "spouse," removing marriage from its privileged position in the official culture. Marriage is no longer the socially accepted norm marking the true conclusion of sexual development, but an individual choice, the business of no one save the couple who embark on it.

Hence no shame now attaches to divorce. Serial polygamy is the norm among successful men, and those who lose out from this state of affairs—the women and children whom they abandon—have been deprived of their most important protection, which was the social penalties suffered by the malefactor. Our society lavishes much sentimental sympathy on imaginary victims, whose feckless behavior is the real cause of their misfortune, but it is utterly indifferent to the real victims, such as illegitimate or abandoned children, whose misfortune results from its own refusal to cast judgment on the wrongdoers.

Transgressions were not neatly divided into offenses in law, to be dealt with only by the law, and offenses to propriety, to be dealt with by social rebuke. Some forms of behavior—dishonesty, for example—came into both categories and could be effectively controlled only by a combination of punishment and social rejection. And the convicted criminal was invariably shamed for his behavior and either ostracized or required to live in a state of penance. This made sense, since the real purpose of shaming is not to punish crimes but to create the kind of people who don't commit them. The criminal therefore had to be held up as an example from which the rest of society could learn.

But stigma is now retreating even from crime. Convicted thieves and burglars are no longer automatically excluded from social gatherings. Indeed, some (such as the English criminal Howard Marks) have acquired kudos from writing about their "hotheaded youth" and the jolly times they had as drug dealers, robbers, or burglars. And if the crime can be represented as an assault on the institutions of bourgeois society, rehabilitation is all the more easy to obtain. A case in point is Nick Leeson, an employee of Baring's Bank (itself a symbol of the old dignity and probity of the City of London) who deceptively squandered the funds entrusted to him and as a result destroyed this venerable institution and the many lives that depended on it. After serving time in a Singapore jail, Leeson returned to England to become a media star, giving interviews and writing articles, enjoying his moment of celebrity and being handsomely paid for it. Even violent criminals, provided they have "done their time" and so have "paid their debt to society," can enjoy a hero's welcome when they travel to foreign parts, as did rapist Mike Tyson on his recent visit to Britain.

In Britain, the leading charity devoted to the treatment of criminals is called the "National Society for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders." Its purpose is to make punishment the prerogative of the state and to neutralize the desire of society to provide supplementary punishments of its own. Not "criminals" but "offenders"; not "punishment" but "care" and "rehabilitation"—or, to use the British PC expression, "social inclusion." No stigma should attach to the criminal on account of his crime: the law punishes him according to its neutral and objective calculus. Our only role thereafter is to forgive and forget, to "rehabilitate," on the assumption that the debt has been paid. And by thinking of crime in this way, you vastly increase its likelihood, since you remove the real motive for good behavior, which is the fear of judgment. When the response to the criminal is not rebuke but rehabilitation, crime is de-moralized, voided of blame, to become a market in which deeds are judged by their price, not their value. The price of rape is seven years; and when the price is paid, you are back, like Mike Tyson, on display.


CULVER PICTURES

A scarlet letter brands Hawthorne's adulteress.

We think of the assault on stigma as beginning with the great dramas of Protestant guilt—with Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, say, or Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*—but it is already there in the Enlightenment emphasis on individual freedom as the goal of social life and in the Romantic conception of the social outsider. The Romantic imagination identifies spontaneously (as in Goethe's *Faust*) with the one who departs from convention or is condemned and cast out by those who enjoy the safety of unquestioned routines. This romanticization of the outcast became routinized in modern literature, and "Mrs. Grundy," the rigid upholder of proprieties in the face of life's need to escape them, became a proverbial object of scorn—along with the proprieties themselves, whose importance to society came increasingly to be forgotten.

To the modern, post-romantic imagination, therefore, the disposition to maintain social norms through stigma and shame seems abhorrent, a form of bad behavior rather than a cure for it. American culture has now firmly set itself against the old forms of social stigma, casting off its Puritan inheritance as something shameful—a novel cause for shame. The twentieth-century war on guilt has hastened this process. Thanks in part to the misreading and vulgarization of Freud by those who saw "repression" as an evil and "liberation" as the cure for it, and in part to the existentialist belief in "authenticity" and "good faith," guilt came to be seen as a negative force, a source of suffering with no compensating benefits.

Many theorists pressed toward this conclusion. Freud's pupil Wilhelm Reich, for example, attacked the "patriarchal family" as the source of sexual repression and of the deformation of the individual libido—as if sexual repression were an unquestionably bad thing. His *Function of the Orgasm* offered to liberate our sexual urges by providing them with a simple and morally neutral goal—not love or commitment or procreation or family, but a brief spasm of the flesh. Herbert Marcuse peddled the same wares in the language of Marxist humanism, while Sartre developed a whole theology of liberation, designed to portray conventional society, its norms and sanctions and conventions, as the source of all that is evil, all that prevents us from flowering in our freedom and enjoying the fruits of authentic choice. The greatest sin, for Sartre, was "bad faith"—obedience to an authority external to the self. Bad faith was the voice of the Other, and the principal enemy of human freedom is the right-thinking, law-abiding, and mutually vigilant community.

The attack on guilt involves a corresponding denial of shame. If we are not to feel guilty about our sexual adventures, for example, then we cannot feel ashamed of them either. Moreover, any attempt to shame us, to hold us up to scorn or contempt for our seductions, orgies, and excesses, is an act of oppression, a negation of our fundamental rights. Henceforth, it was assumed, we are to regard the antics of our neighbors as entirely their own concern, no more to be criticized or ridiculed than the contents of their shopping carts as they reach the supermarket cash register. In the sexual sphere, as in the sphere of commodities, the only binding law is the law of the market.

The odd result of this movement to reject stigma, however, has been the introduction of stigma of another kind. "Judgmental" people find themselves condemned with a vehemence that would have gone down well in Salem. Those who live by the old morality end up paraded with abusive labels: if you deplore illegitimacy and the welfare dependency that often follows it, you show yourself to be "mean-spirited" and lacking in "compassion"; if you oppose the normalization of homosexuality, you are "homophobic"; if you believe in Western culture, you are an "elitist"—all labels that can damage a professional career. Stigma floats free in the anarchic world of individualist life-styles, ready to attach itself to anyone who stands up for self-restraint.

> **"Guilt has come to be seen as a negative force, a source of suffering with no compensating benefits."**

It is in this context that we should understand political correctness. The new kind of stigma creates a new kind of fear. Political correctness is not a morality in the traditional sense: it does not require you to change your life, to make sacrifices, or to live by an exacting code of conduct. It tells you to watch your language, so as to avoid the only prevalent adverse judgment, which is judgment of the adverse judge. It tells you to speak inclusively of other cultures, other lifestyles, other values: never take a disapproving stance or use words that might imply one. Hence the extreme volatility of the new speech codes. Any phrase or idiom that seems to imply judgment of another category or class of people can become, almost overnight, an object of stigma.

Unlike the old forms of stigma, however, whose function was to bind a community together and to seal each member into the common fate, this new form of stigma has precisely the opposite aim: to permit social fragmentation. The talk of "social inclusion" is a mask for the reverse. Political correctness does not seek to include the Other in "our" community but to accept his otherness and allow him to live outside. In effect, it is attempting to create a society of strangers, each pursuing his own gratification in his own freely chosen way, and none answerable for what he does to anyone but himself. Of course, there are limits: those activities that directly threaten life, limb, and property are still forbidden. But they are forbidden by law rather than morality. Moral codes, it is assumed, are ineffective and in any case of only "subjective" force. Insofar as we should have an attitude to the criminal, it too is one based on the attempt to "include" him, despite his error.

There is, however, one great exception to this attitude, and it goes to the heart of our moral nature. This exception is pedophilia. Britons have been up in arms for months over the case of Sarah Payne, an eight-year-old who was abducted, sexually abused, and murdered in June of this year. Sarah was, in her way, a perfect symbol of the old moral order—an innocent child of loving parents, brought up in a traditional family. The shattered faces of her mother and father on TV awoke in everyone not merely sympathy for their suffering but a confused awareness that they are martyrs. They represent the old moral code—and the world it once nurtured—in a society that no longer endorses it. They brought children into a world that no longer believes in childhood—that increasingly connives at the sexualization of children and allows them to set their own agendas, to adore their own idols, and to indulge their own simulacrum of desire. The pedophile is the one who has taken advantage of this situation, which no one has had the moral courage to prevent.

Of course, Sarah was murdered, and even in a shame-free culture, murder is a crime. But everyone knows that Sarah was murdered because she was the object of someone's lust, and that this lust is being normalized. Children in Britain, as in America, are compelled to attend "health education" classes in which they experiment with condoms; a British charity has just issued a guide to sex for children, entitled *Say Yes, Say No, Say Maybe* and explaining the various positions and excitements of intercourse; doctors prescribe contraceptive pills to underage girls and so make themselves accessories to what is officially a crime; the BBC broadcasts obscene and provocative films on television during hours when children are sure to be watching; children are represented in advertisements in alluring and provocative poses; and children's magazines are devoted to virtually no topic other than boyfriends and girlfriends.

Distress over the Sarah Payne case has led to an interesting development. The names of all convicted pedophiles in Britain are added to a register, so that schools, youth clubs, and others who might consider employing them can obtain notice in advance of the danger. Convicted pedophiles invariably leave the scenes of their crimes, knowing that their presence will not be tolerated there. And their attempts to start a new life are, in general, encouraged by the police. Since the Sarah Payne case, however, the Sunday *News of the World* has obtained a copy of the pedophile register and has printed the names, photographs, and addresses of those listed in it, together with details of their crimes. The police objected, seeing this as an invitation to criminal assault or worse. But for some weeks, the paper continued its regular Sunday feature, profiting from the enormous public appetite for these details, now that the long-dormant desire to stigmatize has reawakened. Very soon, people named in its pages—some of them in error—were fleeing from their homes, while vociferous crowds gathered outside to abuse, threaten, and assault them. One committed suicide; the police have relocated others at great public expense.

The case is additionally interesting in that the *News of the World* owes its readership to an undiluted diet of salacious stories of the kind retailed in school playgrounds, in which underwear and private parts feature prominently, often described in the language of schoolchildren. It also carries pictures of topless teenage girls who are, if not physically, at any rate mentally and morally children. The newspaper has tried to profit from the desire to stigmatize the thing that it also profits from by provoking.

The hysteria over pedophilia is indicative of a society that has come to the brink of self-destruction and stands there accusing the void. People reach for their old certainties: words like "pervert" and "perversion" suddenly seem right to them; they look round for the culprit with a view to shaming, humiliating, and ostracizing him. And they recognize the vastness of the evil that is around them and within them, an evil they only imperfectly confess to.

The confrontation between parents and pedophiles is a last-ditch battle on behalf of the old sexual morality, a final attempt to salvage the process whereby societies reproduce themselves not only physically but also morally. It is the most serious proof on offer that modern adults are still animated by the will to produce children who are objects of love, and not fodder for appetite. Were political correctness to become the norm in this area too—as well it might, when the newly fashionable "rights of children" are extended to guarantee a right of sexual privacy, and when the British government succeeds in lowering the age of consent to homosexual sex to 16, an age when children are still compelled to go to school—then the "society of strangers" would at last be a reality. "Social inclusion" would mean social atomization, with no one caring a fig for others' behavior, provided only that he is not directly threatened by it, and with no one doing anything to ensure that the benefits and burdens of civilization are passed on.

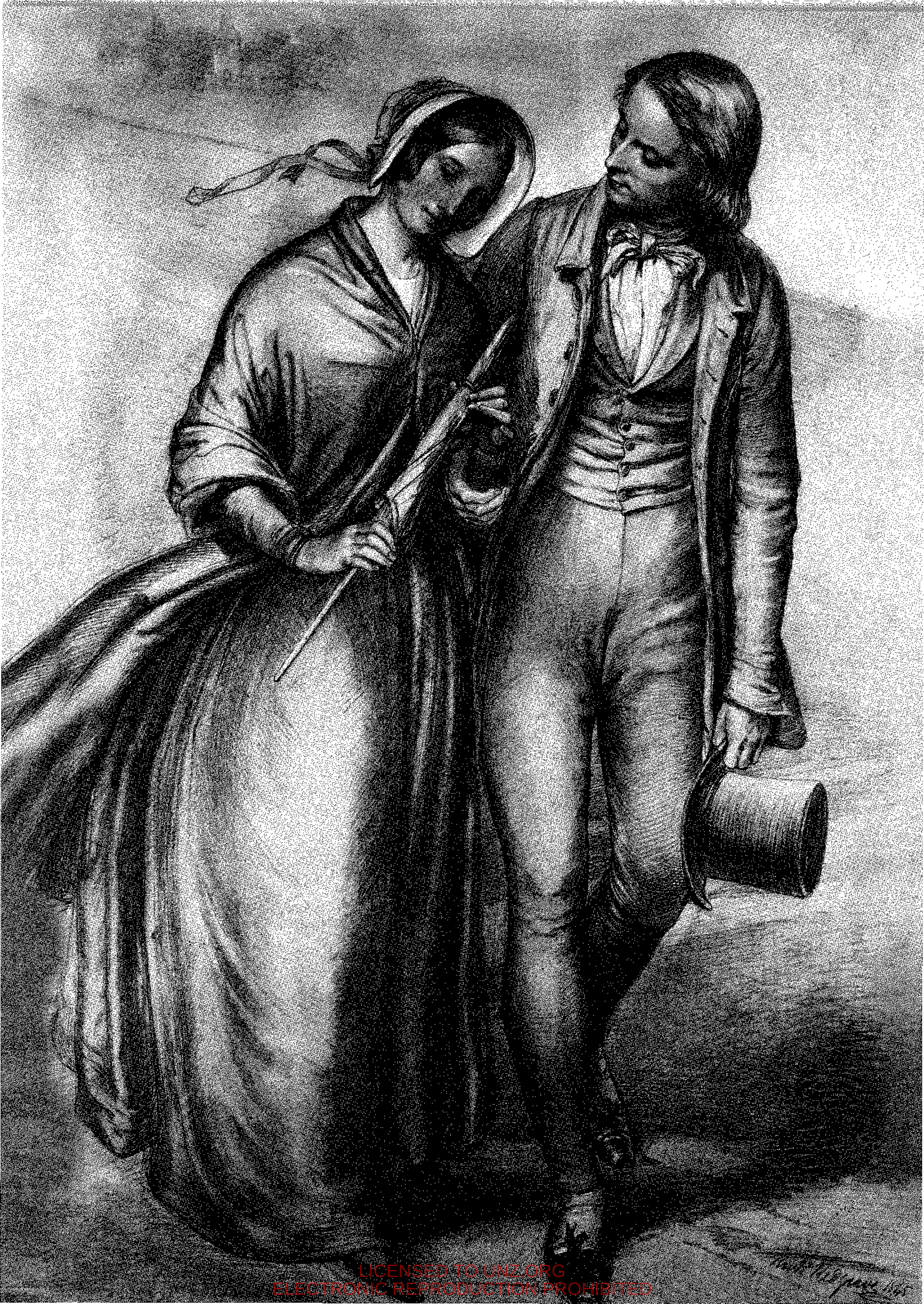
Of course, we haven't reached that stage. Nevertheless, the permitted forms of stimgatization are dwindling. We know that some form of social control is necessary. Even in the prevailing climate of ignorance and denial, most people are able to draw from their sparse knowledge of history the conclusion that barbarism lies just below the surface, awaiting its opportunity to destroy. But people are afraid to judge their neighbors and hope that somehow the future of society will be taken care of, even though everyone is busy retreating from the arduous business of moral judgment.

As for the liberal intelligentsia, it seems to be unable to perceive the threat and blames every increase in social entropy on those who seek to contain it. Indeed, there seems to be a prevailing opinion among our elites that sexual mores are no longer a matter of public concern, that it is irrelevant to society that people should saturate their senses and their thoughts with violent, pornographic, or perverted images, and that, in any case, children will still be born, still grow up, still enjoy their years of innocence, still walk to school with their satchels on their backs and come home in the evening to *Alice in Wonderland* or at any rate *Calvin and Hobbes*. But this complacent belief is patently false: so bad are things in Britain that it is now a criminal offense to allow your child to walk unaccompanied on country lanes, and no parents in their right minds would allow their children out in the evenings even in a populous neighborhood—especially in a populous neighborhood.

"Stigma is not an act of aggression but a sign that we care about our neighbors' lives and actions."

The dwindling of stigma inevitably means that the task of social control is bequeathed to the state. The state has therefore become the guardian of social order. But this has happened at the very moment when the state sees no remedy for social ills besides "compassion," meaning the habit of subsidizing malefactors. The state no longer represents normal bourgeois society, its conventions and proprieties. Instead, it has become subversive of those things, devoted to monopolizing all moral sanctions while at the same time voiding them of their force. Punishments are ever lighter, excuses ever more acceptable, and all opportunities to condemn or judge are smothered by a haze of political correctness.

To reproach your neighbor is to risk his goodwill; to uphold convention is to expose yourself to mockery from the liberated. And yet the good of society may require that ordinary people take these risks—risks that require courage, justice, and even a touch of humility if they are to be successfully managed. Modern literature has not often sung the heroism of the conventional conscience. But that heroism was sung beautifully by the Greeks, both in the choruses to the tragedies and in characters, such as Creon in the *Antigone* of Sophocles, who try to keep the ship of state afloat despite the passionate transgressions of its citizens. There is nothing that will serve us better than this old kind of heroism—the heroism of disapproval, whereby people risk condemnation for condemnation's sake. Stigma is not an act of aggression but a sign that we care about our neighbors' lives and actions. It expresses the consciousness of other people, the desire for their good opinion, and the impetus to uphold the social norms that make judgment possible. It is the outward expression of an inner orderliness—and a declaration of faith in human nature. ◆



Why Marriage Is Good for You

The data are clear: you'll live longer, stay saner, get richer, and be happier.

Maggie Gallagher

When Americans debate the value of marriage, most attention focuses on the potential harm to children of divorce or illegitimacy, and for good reason. Mountains of research tell us that children reared outside of intact marriages are much more likely than other kids to slip into poverty, become victims of child abuse, fail at school and drop out, use illegal drugs, launch into premature sexual activity, become unwed teen mothers, divorce, commit suicide and experience other signs of mental illness, become physically ill, and commit crimes and go to jail. On average, children reared outside of marriage are less successful in their careers, even after controlling not only for income but also for parental conflict.

Yes, marriage protects children. And yes, marriage therefore protects taxpayers and society from a broad and deep set of costs, personal and communal. But there is another case for marriage, equally significant, that you probably haven't heard. Marriage is a powerful creator and sustainer of human and social capital for adults as well as children, about as important as education when it comes to promoting the health, wealth, and well-being of adults and communities. For most Americans, this is news. When it comes to adults, the case for lifelong marriage has been framed in exclusively moral, spiritual, and emotional terms: one side argues for personal liberation from marriage, the other urges parents to sacrifice for God's and/or the kids' sake.

Married people are half as likely as singles or cohabitors to say they're unhappy.

These are important considerations to be sure. Parents surely should be willing to make appropriate sacrifices for their kids' sake. But framing the marriage debate solely in those terms obscures as much as it reveals. It misses the profound benefits that lasting marriage confers on adults. And it overestimates considerably the likelihood that divorce will, in fact, lead to greater happiness for the individual.

Recently, I had the opportunity to review the scientific evidence on the consequences of marriage for adults with University of Chicago scholar Linda J. Waite for our new book, *The Case for Marriage*. What I found surprised me. Quietly, with little fanfare, a broad and deep body of scientific literature has been accumulating that affirms what Genesis teaches: it is not good for man to be alone—no, nor woman neither. In virtually every way that social scientists can measure, married people do much better than the unmarried or divorced: they live longer, healthier, happier, sexier, and more affluent lives.

How big a difference does marriage make? If David Letterman were to compile a Top Ten list for marriage, it might look something like this:

TOP TEN REASONS WHY MARRIAGE IS GOOD FOR YOU:

10. IT'S SAFER. Marriage lowers the risk that both men and women will become victims of violence, including domestic violence. A 1994 Justice Department report, based on the National Crime Victimization Survey, found that single and divorced women were four to five times more likely to be victims of violence in any given year than wives; bachelors were four times more likely to be violent-crime victims than husbands. Two-

RICHARD REDGRAVE (1804-88), *THE WEDDING MORNING-THE DEPARTURE*, VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON, UK/THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

thirds of acts of violence against women committed by intimate partners were not committed by husbands but by boyfriends (whether live-in or not) or former husbands or boyfriends. As one scholar sums up the relevant research: "Regardless of methodology, the studies yielded similar results: cohabitors engage in more violence than spouses." Linda Waite conducted an analysis of the National Survey of Families and Households for our new book. She found that, even after controlling for education, race, age, and gender, people who live together are still three times more likely to say their arguments got physical (such as kicking, hitting, or shoving) in the past year than married couples.

> **"Married people not only make more money, they manage it better and build more wealth together than either would alone."**

9. IT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE. Married people live longer and healthier lives. The power of marriage is particularly evident in late middle age. When Linda Waite and a colleague, for example, analyzed mortality differentials in a very large, nationally representative sample, they found an astonishingly large "marriage gap" in longevity: nine out of ten married guys who are alive at 48 will make it to age 65, compared with just six in ten comparable single guys (controlling for race, education, and income). For women, the protective benefits of marriage are also powerful, though not quite as large. Nine out of ten wives alive at age 48 will live to be senior citizens, compared with just eight out of ten divorced and single women.

In fact, according to statisticians Bernard Cohen and I-Sing Lee, who compiled a catalog of relative mortality risks, "being unmarried is one of the greatest risks that people voluntarily subject themselves to." Having heart disease, for example, reduces a man's life expectancy by just under six years, while being unmarried chops almost ten years off a man's life. This is not just a selection effect: even controlling for initial health status, sick people who are married live longer than their unmarried counterparts. Having a spouse, for example, lowers a cancer patient's risk of dying from the disease as much as being in an age category ten years younger. A recent study of outcomes for surgical patients found that just being married lowered a patient's risk of dying in the hospital. For perhaps more obvious reasons, the risk a hospital patient will be discharged to a nursing home was two and a half times greater if the patient was unmarried. Scientists who have studied immune functioning in the laboratory find that happily married couples have better-functioning immune systems. Divorced people, even years after the divorce, show much lower levels of immune function.

8. IT CAN SAVE YOUR KID'S LIFE. Children lead healthier, longer lives if parents get and stay married. Adults who fret about secondhand smoke and drunk driving would do well to focus at least some of their attention on this point. In one long-term study that followed a sample of highly advantaged children (middle-class whites with IQs of at least 135) up through their seventies, a parent's divorce knocked four years off the adult child's life expectancy. Forty-year-olds from divorced homes were three times more likely to die from all causes than 40-year-olds whose parents stayed married.

7. YOU WILL EARN MORE MONEY. Men today tend to think of marriage as a consumption item—a financial burden. But a broad and deep body of scientific literature suggests that for men especially, marriage is a productive institution—as important as education in boosting a man's earnings. In fact, getting a wife may increase an American male's salary by about as much as a college education. Married men make, by some estimates, as much as 40 percent more money than comparable single guys, even after controlling for education and job history. The longer a man stays married, the higher the marriage premium he receives. Wives' earnings also benefit from marriage, but they decline when motherhood enters the picture. Childless white wives get a marriage wage premium of 4 percent, and

FRENCH SCHOOL (C. 1830) *THE WEDDING CEREMONY*, CHARLES PLANTE FINE ARTS/BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

Close to 60 percent of married people still stay married for life.

black wives earn 10 percent more than comparable single women.

6. DID I MENTION YOU'LL GET MUCH RICHER? Married people not only make more money, they manage money better and build more wealth together than either would alone. At identical income levels, for example, married people are less likely to report "economic hardship" or trouble paying basic bills. The longer you stay married, the more assets you build; by contrast, length of cohabitation has no relationship to wealth accumulation. On the verge of retirement, the average married couple has accumulated assets worth about $410,000, compared with $167,000 for the never-married and $154,000 for the divorced. Couples who stayed married in one study saw their assets increase twice as fast as those who had remained divorced over a five-year period.

5. YOU'LL TAME HIS CHEATIN' HEART (HERS, TOO). Marriage increases sexual fidelity. Cohabiting men are four times more likely to cheat than husbands, and cohabiting women are eight times more likely

to cheat than wives. Marriage is also the only realistic promise of permanence in a romantic relationship. Just one out of ten cohabiting couples are still cohabiting after five years. By contrast, 80 percent of couples marrying for the first time are still married five years later, and close to 60 percent (if current divorce rates continue) will marry for life. One British study found that biological parents who marry are three times more likely still to be together two years later than biological two-parent families who cohabit, even after controlling for maternal age, education, economic hardship, previous relationship failure, depression, and relationship quality. Marriage may be riskier than it once was, but when it comes to making love last, there is still no better bet.

“Being married conferred a happiness advantage over and above its power to improve the pocketbook and the health chart.”

4. YOU WON’T GO BONKERS. Marriage is good for your mental health. Married men and women are less depressed, less anxious, and less psychologically distressed than single, divorced, or widowed Americans. By contrast, getting divorced lowers both men’s and women’s mental health, increasing depression and hostility, and lowering one’s self-esteem and sense of personal mastery and purpose in life.

And this is not just a statistical illusion: careful researchers who have tracked individuals as they move toward marriage find that it is not just that happy, healthy people marry; instead, getting married gives individuals a powerful mental health *boost*. Nadine Marks and James Lambert looked at changes in the psychological health of a large sample of Americans in the late eighties and early nineties. They measured psychological well-being at the outset and then watched what happened to individuals over the next years as they married, remained single, or divorced. When people married, their mental health improved—consistently and substantially. When people divorced, they suffered substantial deterioration in mental and emotional well-being, including increases in depression and declines in reported happiness. Those who divorced over this period also reported a lower sense of personal mastery, less positive relations with others, less sense of purpose in life, and lower levels of self-acceptance than their married peers did.

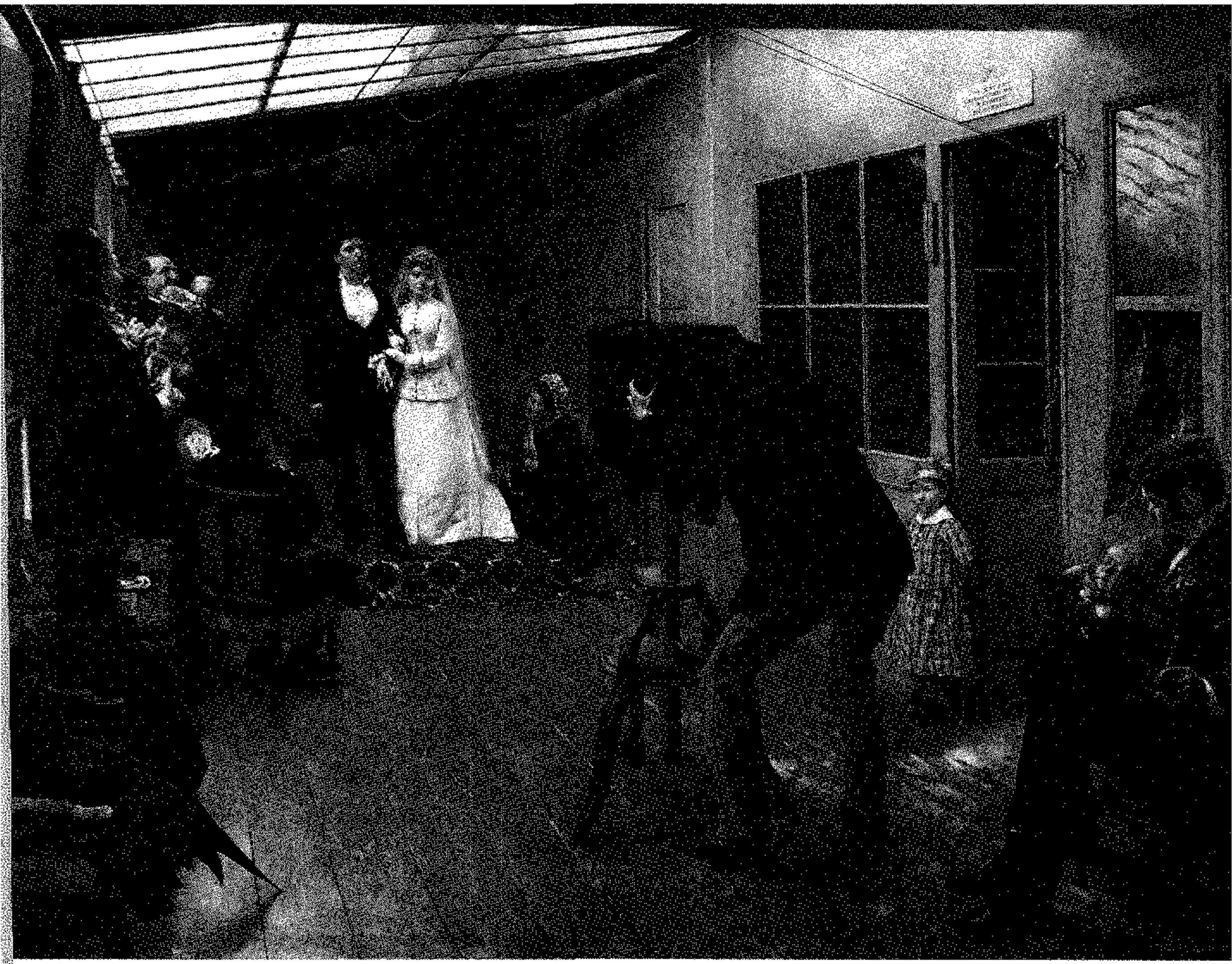
Married men are only half as likely as bachelors and one-third as likely as divorced guys to take their own lives. Wives are also much less likely to commit suicide than single, divorced, or widowed women. Married people are much less likely to have problems with alcohol abuse or illegal drugs. In a recent national survey, one out of four single men ages 19 to 26 say their drinking causes them problems at work or problems with aggression, compared with just one out of seven married guys this age.

3. IT WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY. For most people, the joys of the single life and of divorce are overrated. Overall, 40 percent of married people, compared with about a quarter of singles or cohabitors, say they are “very happy” with life in general. Married people are also only about half as likely as singles or cohabitors to say they are unhappy with their lives.

How happy are the divorced? If people divorce in order to be happy, as we are often told, the majority should demand their money back. Just 18 percent of divorced adults say they are “very happy,” and divorced adults are twice as likely as married folk to say they are “not too happy” with life in general. Only a minority of divorcing adults go on to make marriages that are happier than the one they left. “Divorce or be miserable,” certain cultural voices tell us, but, truth be told, “Divorce *and* be miserable” is at least as likely an outcome.

This is not just an American phenomenon. One recent study by Steven Stack and J. Ross Eshleman of 17 developed nations found that “married persons have a significantly higher level of happiness than persons who are not married,” even after controlling for gender, age, education, children, church attendance, financial satisfaction, and self-reported health. Further, “the strength of the association between being married and being

PASCAL DAGNAN-BOUVERET (1852-1929), *WEDDING AT THE PHOTOGRAPHER’S*, MUSEE DES BEAUX-ARTS, LYONS/THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY



Far from being a financial burden, marriage is economically productive.

happy is remarkably consistent across nations." Marriage boosted financial satisfaction and health. But being married conferred a happiness advantage over and above its power to improve the pocketbook and the health chart. Cohabitation, by contrast, did not increase financial satisfaction or perceived health, and the boost to happiness from having a live-in lover was only about a quarter of that of being married. Another large study, of 100,000 Norwegians, found that, with both men and women, "the married have the highest level of subjective well-being, followed by the widowed." Even long-divorced people who cohabited were not any happier than singles.

2. YOUR KIDS WILL LOVE YOU MORE. Divorce weakens the bonds between parents and children over the long run. Adult children of divorce describe relationships with both their mother and their father less positively, on average, and they are about 40 percent less likely than adults from intact marriages to say they see either parent at least several times a week.

1. YOU'LL HAVE BETTER SEX, MORE OFTEN. Despite the lurid *Sex in the City* marketing that promises singles erotic joys untold, both husbands and wives are more likely to report that they have an extremely satisfying sex life than are singles or cohabitors. (Divorced women were the least likely to have a sex life they found extremely satisfying emotionally.) For one thing, married people are more likely to *have* a sex life. Single men are 20 times more likely, and single women ten times more likely, not to have had sex even once in the past year than the married. (Almost a quarter of single guys and 30 percent of single women lead sexless lives.)

Married people are also the most likely to report a highly satisfying sex life. Wives, for example, are almost twice as likely as divorced and never-married women to have a sex life that a) exists and b) is extremely satisfying emotionally. Contrary to popular lore, for men, having a wife beats shacking up by a wide margin: 50 percent of husbands say sex with their partner is extremely satisfying physically, compared with 39 percent of cohabiting men.

How can a piece of paper work such miracles? For surprisingly, the piece of paper, and not just the personal relationship, matters a great deal. People who live together, for the most part, don't reap the same kinds of benefits that men and women who marry do. Something about marriage as a social institution—a shared aspiration and a public, legal vow—gives wedlock the power to change individuals' lives.

By increasing confidence that this partnership will last, marriage allows men and women to specialize—to take on those parts of life's tasks, from developing an interesting social life to getting money out of insurance companies, that one person does better or enjoys more than the other. Though this specialization is often along traditional gender lines, it doesn't have to be. Even childless married couples benefit from splitting up the work. Married households have twice the talent, twice the time, and twice the labor pool of singles. Over time, as spouses specialize, each actually produces more in both market and nonmarket goods than singles who have to shoulder all of life's tasks on their own.

But because marriage is a partnership in the whole of life, backed up by family, community, and religious values, marriage can do what economic partnerships don't: give a greater sense of meaning and purpose to life (a reason to exercise or cut back on booze, work harder, and to keep plugging even in the middle of those times when the marriage may not feel gratifying at all). Married people are both responsible for and responsible to another human being, and both halves of that dynamic lead the married to live more responsible, fruitful, and satisfying lives. Marriage is a transformative act, changing the way two people look at each other, at the future, and at their roles in society. And it changes the way significant others—from family to congregation to insurance companies and the IRS—look at and treat that same couple. Sexual fidelity, an economic union, a parenting alliance, the promise of care that transcends day-to-day emotions: all these are what give a few words mumbled before a clergyman or judge the power to change lives.

> **“Marriage is a transformative act, changing the way two people look at each other and at the future.”**

What proportion of unhappily married couples who stick it out stay miserable? The latest data show that within five years, just 12 percent of very unhappily married couples who stick it out are still unhappy; 70 percent of the unhappiest couples now describe their marriage as "very" or "quite" happy.

Just as good marriages go bad, bad marriages go good. And they have a better chance of doing so in a society that recognizes the value of marriage than one that sings the statistically dubious joys of divorce. ■

Research for this article was supported by the Brunie Fund for New York Journalism.

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The Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Collection was founded in 1930 and contains more than 500,000 books and 28 million manuscript items. In addition to a wide range of collections, Columbia holds the papers of John Jay, the archive of Alexander Hamilton's legal practice, and transcripts of the Oral History Research Office.

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Let's End Housing Vouchers

The politically popular Section 8 program ruins neighborhoods and perpetuates poverty.

Howard Husock

Though crime-ridden high-rise projects are public housing policy's most abiding symbol, the majority of today's subsidized tenants don't live in them. Instead, 1.7 million households now get government vouchers that help pay their rent in the private market, at a cost of over $13 billion a year—a third of HUD's total budget. Liberals embrace these vouchers because they believe poor families can never afford decent market-rate housing; conservatives like the vouchers' ostensible free-market mechanism, which harnesses the private sector to serve a public goal. In Washington, the only question is how much to increase spending on the program. But out in the blue-collar and middle-class neighborhoods where voucher holders increasingly live, longtime residents hate the program. It undermines and destabilizes their communities by importing social problems into their midst, they say—vociferously enough to get the attention of local legislators. Though the program's supporters dismiss the critics (some of whom are black) as racists, they are nothing of the kind. And they are right.

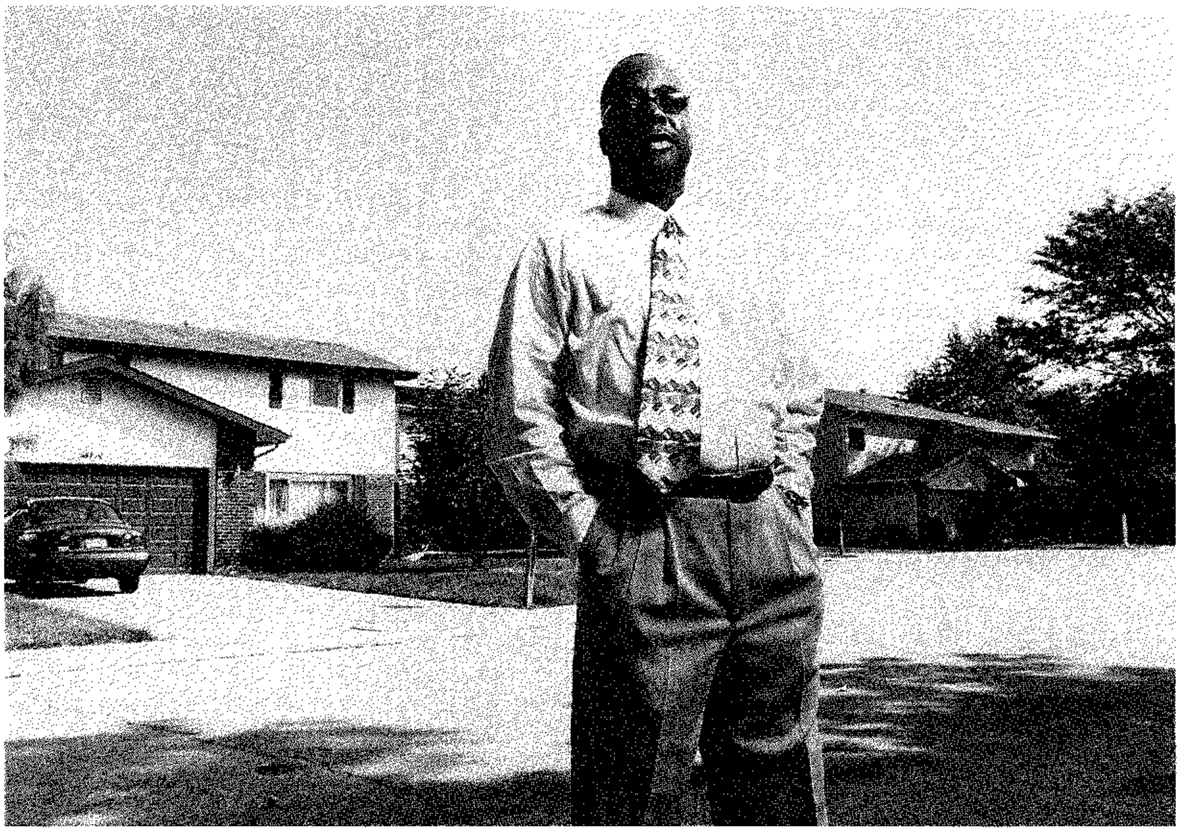
In south suburban Chicago, with one of the highest concentrations of voucher holders in the country, middle-class African-American residents complain that they thought they'd left the ghetto behind—only to find that the federal government is subsidizing it to follow them. Vikkey Perez of Richton Park, Illinois, owner of Nubian Beauty Supply, fears that the small signs of disorder that have come with voucher tenants—the unmown lawns and shopping carts left in the street—could undermine the neighborhood. "Their life-style," she says, "doesn't blend with our suburban life-style." Kevin Moore, a hospital administrator and homeowner in nearby Hazelcrest, complains that children in voucher homes go unsupervised. Boom boxes play late at night. "I felt like I was back on the West Side," he says, referring to the Chicago ghetto where he grew up. "You have to remember how to act tough."

In South Philadelphia's Irish and Italian neighborhoods, which have seen an influx of voucher holders, elected officials report being inundated with constituent complaints—and watching white constituents move out of the neighborhood. The area's state representative, William Keller, describes how owners of row houses suddenly find that "the house next door is being rented to people whose kids are up all night, who are out in the street yelling 'M-F' this and 'M-F' that. It's like they're trying to find the worst people." The issue, he says, "isn't race; it's class."

In Maryland's Prince George's County, an area of the Washington, D.C., suburbs with a large concentration of middle-class black residents, hundreds of voucher tenants—many of whom come from Washington, since vouchers are portable from one jurisdiction to another—do not pay their utility bills or their required 30 percent share of the rent. "We're very concerned about the program," says Mary Lou McDonough of the Prince George's Housing Authority, which doles out the vouchers. The Authority is concerned about more than non-payment. Unlike most such agencies, it screens its voucher applicants, and it finds that some of the households have criminal records—including, recently, a murder conviction. Every year, the authority boots out 25 or 30 voucher holders for brand-new crimes, usually drug-related.

How could so politically popular a program become so fraught with trouble? The problem lies both in the program's underlying assumptions and its governing regulations. The idea began with Lyndon Johnson's Kaiser Commission on Urban Housing, which mistakenly believed that the private housing market couldn't provide the poor with decent homes they could afford, despite the fact that for much of the twentieth century it did so quite well. "The root of the problem in housing America's poor," the commissioners wrote, "is the gap between the price that private enterprise must receive and the price the poor can afford. The economic gap

Photographs by Todd Buchanan



Suburban Chicago homeowner Kevin Moore complains that kids in Section 8 homes go unsupervised. "I felt like I was back on the West Side," he says, referring to the tough Chicago ghetto where he grew up.

separating millions of deprived families from adequate housing can only be bridged by government subsidies. Such subsidies create an effective and real market demand to which private enterprise has proved it will respond."

Accepting this rationale, the Nixon administration, stung by scandals and cost overruns in federally subsidized housing construction, proposed the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, whose Section 8 authorized federal rent subsidies for privately owned apartments. These so-called Section 8 vouchers appealed to Republicans because of their contrast with public housing built and operated at government expense. Not only did vouchers rely on the private market, but also they did not require public housing's ongoing maintenance costs.

As the program expanded, Republican officials continued to focus on the mechanics and efficiency of the program, without stopping to reconsider its fundamental assumption that, without subsidies, the private housing market couldn't serve the poor. For example, John Weicher, a Republican former HUD deputy assistant secretary now with the Hudson Institute, maintained that, through Section 8, "we can achieve the modest degree of improvement needed to bring many of our dwellings up to current quality standards and can provide significant financial relief for many hard-pressed poor families." The program, he thought, would allow the poor to move to "better neighborhoods," as if—another faulty assumption—a move to a middle-class environment would make them middle class.

Today's housing bureaucrats continue to take as gospel the Kaiser Commission's core belief that housing—unless it's a shanty or a cold-water flat—will inevitably be too expensive for families of modest means. One example of many: a HUD press release this March bore the headline GOOD TIMES FOR MANY DON'T END HARD TIMES FOR LOW-INCOME RENTERS; DESPITE ECONOMIC BOOM, HUD FINDS HOUSING CRISIS DEEPENING.

But federal numbers don't support this assertion. Poor families *can* afford existing private housing without a subsidy—so long as the family has two earners. The federal government figures that it takes $27,000 for a family of four in Philadelphia to afford a house—that's where the voucher kicks in. But this is only barely above the $24,000 that two people earning the minimum wage would jointly earn. The additional support the Earned Income Tax Credit gives the working poor would close this "housing gap" even further, providing a $1,300 payment to a household with two children. In other words, the government officially presumes that a household in which two people earn only barely more than the minimum wage (and in this time of full employment, many unskilled workers make more) could afford private, unsubsidized housing. (Of course, a stay-at-home spouse who saved a family child-care expenses would have the same economic effect as a second job holder.) Our "housing problem," then, really is just another name for our single-parent family and illegitimacy problems, with female-headed households making up fully 84 percent of voucher holders (and a comparable percentage of public housing tenants, too).

> **"Our 'housing problem' really is just another name for our single-parent family and illegitimacy problems."**

Erroneous assumptions about housing affordability rest upon a failure to understand the importance of the means—marriage and thrift, above all—by which families improve their prospects so they can move to a good home in a good neighborhood. Better neighborhoods are not better because of something in the water but because people have built and sustained them by their efforts, their values, and their commitments. Voucher appropriations are based not only on the mistaken belief that it is necessary to award, at public expense, a better home to all who can demonstrate "need," but also that it is uplifting to do so, when in fact it is the effort to achieve the good home, rather than the good home in itself, that is the real engine of uplift.

Add to these misunderstandings the unanticipated effects of the Section 8 program's design, and you have a lethal mix. Although anyone earning less than 80 percent of the median income in theory qualifies for the program, vouchers are in limited supply, and priority goes to the poorest applicants. By law, fully 75 percent of vouchers must go to households earning only 30 percent or less of median family income. Local housing authorities can go even further in targeting the "neediest"; a quarter of Philadelphia's vouchers, for instance, go to those living in homeless shelters. These priorities are what torque the voucher program toward single-parent households, the country's lowest income group.

The priority given to such households, many of them on welfare or only recently off the rolls, forms part of a package of benefits—including food stamps, Medicaid, and the Earned Income Tax Credit—that have no time limits and that, taken together, constitute significant continuing public support for single-parent low-income households. So counter does this open-ended housing voucher run to welfare reform's five-year limit that Philadelphia's brochures that describe the program stress that, no, there really is no time limit.

What's more, the program has the effect of concentrating problem-ridden, very poor single-parent families in specific neighborhoods. Under normal circumstances, Section 8 tenants would be concentrated anyway. Most landlords would shun them, for fear they would damage their property. Only owners of hard-to-rent, run-down buildings would welcome them, and these properties would be concentrated in marginal neighborhoods struggling hard to maintain their respectability. Other things being equal, landlords would try hard to find respectable working-class tenants before renting to subsidized Section 8 families.

But other things are not equal. Voucher tenants come with significant advantages to outweigh their drawbacks. Landlords don't have to worry about non-payment, since the government deposits its share of the rent—the lion's share—directly into the property owner's bank account. Moreover, for properties in precariously respectable neighborhoods, the government-paid rent is more than the market rent. Reason: the Section 8 program allows voucher holders to pay up to the average rent in their entire metropolitan area, and landlords in working-class or lower-middle-class neighborhoods, where rents are below average, simply charge voucher holders exactly that average rent. Assured payment and a more-than-generous risk premium: no wonder some landlords in neighborhoods teetering on the brink of respectability gladly welcome voucher tenants over working-class families offering lower rents and so accelerate neighborhood decline. South Philadelphia state representative William Keller tells of local property owners who "couldn't rent their place for $500, but they can get $900 from Section 8."

The result is a familiar government-subsidized racket: landlords who specialize in Section 8s—who advertise for them and know the bureaucratic rules about what it takes to get paid. In Philadelphia, state representatives and members of the City Council say that they get daily complaints about Section 8 tenants, and they keep a list of landlords and their Section 8 holdings. "There are guys with 100 Section 8 houses," says Philadelphia city councilman James Kenney. "They're clearing $40,000 a month just in Section 8 income." In south suburban Chicago, Section 8 tenants have taken over whole subdivisions of attached row houses. One subdivision in the Riverdale suburb is now a virtual Section 8 ghetto, with more than 200 voucher holders, and the whole of Riverdale has 336 voucher households out of a total population of just 13,000. Locals have nicknamed the bus that takes many of these minority voucher holders to the plentiful low-wage jobs of the western suburbs the "Apartheid Express."

As Democratic Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland points out, vouchers are replacing "vertical ghettos with horizontal ones." The southern suburbs of Chicago, where anger over Section 8 is reaching the boiling point, have absorbed almost 58 percent of all the Cook County Housing Authority's vouchers—more, in other words, than all the other parts of Chicago and its suburbs combined. All but a handful of the voucher-holders who moved from Washington, D.C., to its suburbs ended up in Maryland's Prince George's County. In Philadelphia, 45 percent of voucher holders inhabit just two of the city's five major sections—South Philadelphia and Northeast Philadelphia—blue-collar areas unaccustomed to subsidized housing.

The effects of a concentration of voucher holders on a small municipality are profound. "It has touched every aspect of the city government," says Riverdale mayor Joe Szabo. Like most of the municipalities south of Chicago, where the now-vanished steel mills and other heavy industry once clustered, this town of small ranch houses dwarfed by looming power-line stanchions has always been a solidly blue-collar place, with an active community life. Recently, though, Szabo has noticed things changing. There are more children than ever in town, but the once-popular youth football program has died. "We just can't get parent volunteers," he says. The mayor pushes park officials to mount more and more programs for lower-income children but finds that the kids' mothers just don't take the time to sign them up. "We'd have to go to individual households and convince them to send their kids, and even then they might not show up," he reports.

Demands have risen, though, for other sorts of public services. EMT crews respond to emergency calls to find callers, accustomed to city emergency rooms, simply saying they're "feeling ill." Riverdale's Potter elementary school, once boasting a top academic reputation, now has the state's highest student turnover. Student achievement has dropped—putting paid to the idea that shipping poor families to good schools in the suburbs will cause an education ethic to rub off. Instead, the concentration of disorganized families has undermined a once good school. School funds, says the mayor, must now be diverted to the legions of "special needs" students. Crime is up, too—"we have real legitimate gang issues now," the mayor says—and the city has had to increase its police force by 35 percent, from 26 to 35. That's pushing the tax rate up, which the mayor fears will discourage new home buyers, pushing the small city into a cycle of decline. A lack of local buying power—a function of the voucher program's preference for very low-income renters—has already left storefronts abandoned on Riverdale's main street.

Wayne Curry, the elected county executive of Maryland's Prince George's County (and the first African-American to hold the job), has similar worries about the impact of voucher holders on his jurisdiction. As the *Washington Post* observed in March: "Curry is trying to grow the economic base of Prince George's—which has one of the nation's largest black middle-class communities—by attracting higher-income residents that draw merchants and businesses. Taking in a larger share of the region's poor runs counter to that goal."

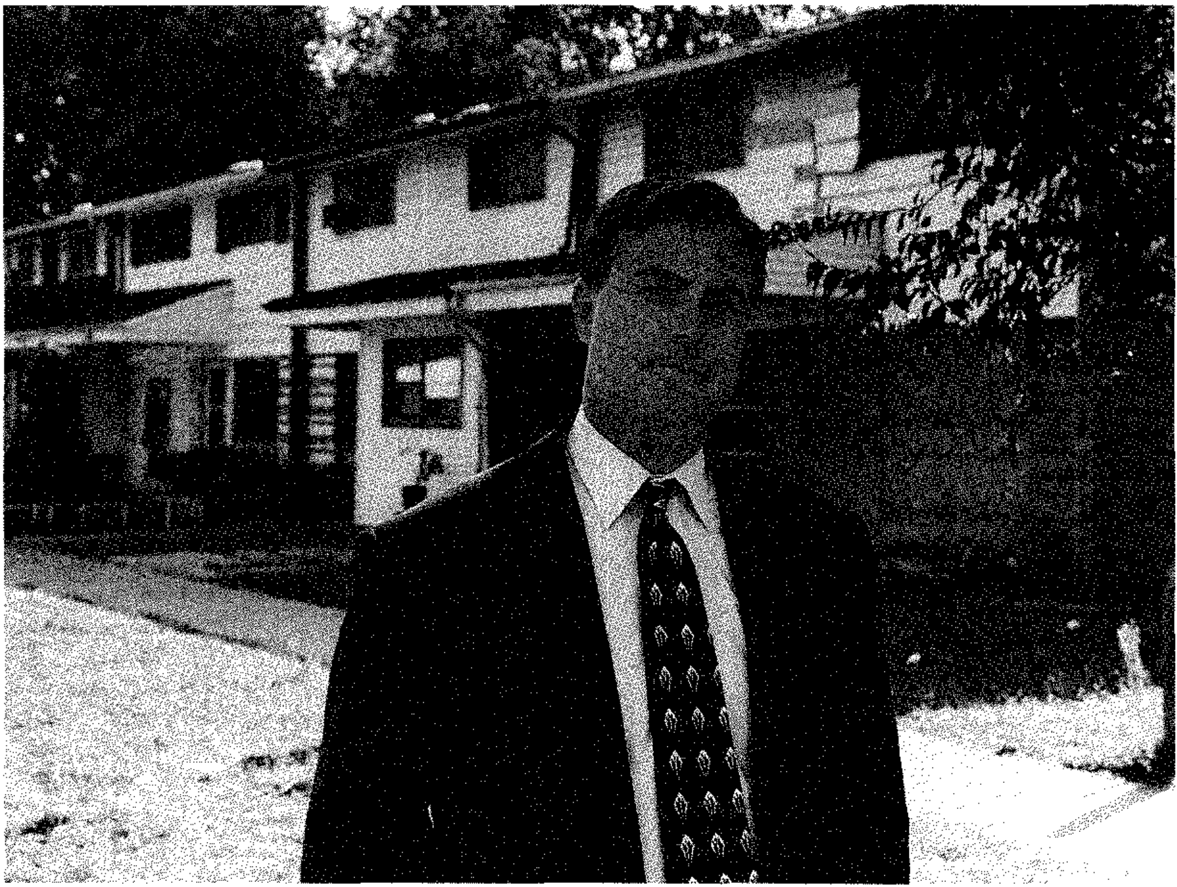
> **"Vouchers can lead to the deterioration of individual properties as well as of whole neighborhoods."**

Vouchers can lead to the deterioration of individual properties as well as of whole neighborhoods. Most landlords are unwilling to rent to voucher tenants: 40 percent of the voucher funds in Cook County, and $1 billion nationally, went unused because voucher holders couldn't find landlords willing to accept their scrip. Throughout California, where landlords can find solid working-class tenants who can pay more than the vouchers pay, voucher tenants are not welcome. So voucher holders, once they succeed in finding housing, tend not to rock the boat, contrary to the expectation that they would exert leverage on landlords to keep up their properties. Moreover, observes assistant manager Patrick Finn of the village of Flossmoor in south suburban Chicago, "If you are only paying $200, and you're getting a $700 or $800 apartment, your expectations are low. It's not your money. Section 8 supports the weakest section of the real-estate market—the house that can't sell, the absentee owner who doesn't perform well in the private marketplace. It subsidizes the marginal sector."

Though in theory the voucher program was supposed to promote racial integration as inner-city minority households used their vouchers to move to previously all-white suburban neighborhoods, the effect in practice appears to be just the opposite. Vouchers are creating new, all-black communities. Joe Martin, director of an organization that has been trying for more than 20 years to attract middle-class African-American newcomers to south suburban Chicago while retaining long-term white residents, notes that the spread of voucher holders makes his already difficult task harder. "Voucher holders," he says, "have the effect of confirming the worst stereotypes." Racial integration is hard enough when whites and blacks are at relatively similar incomes. Mixing poverty-level blacks—by design of the Section 8 program—with middle-class whites is a recipe for racial instability.

But voucher-related racial problems are not confined to suburbs. The majority of voucher placements are, in fact, in lower-income urban neighborhoods, many of which are oases of hardworking families trying to maintain their properties. These are people who must be allowed to distinguish themselves from the disorderly poor. When the shabby-genteel neighborhood is white and the disorderly poor who arrive are black, the mixture is explosive—as in Philadelphia, where the Housing Authority has consistently placed the "worst stereotypes," minority former shelter residents and long-term public housing tenants, in historically white ethnic blue-collar neighborhoods.

In South Philly, the neighborhood office of state representative William Keller bustles with irate residents whose entire net worth is tied up in their homes and who fear that the presence of voucher holders will undermine the value of their property. At a City Council hearing last year, Lynne Rotoli of the Mayfair Civic Association in Northeast Philly blamed vouchers for the fact that property values in her neighborhood were declining while taxes were going up. Residents of absentee-owned rental properties did not participate in community life, she said, and subsidized tenants kept late hours, making it



Riverdale, Illinois, mayor Joe Szabo has watched housing vouchers destroy the sense of community in his once solidly blue-collar Chicago suburb. "We have real legitimate gang issues now," he says.

hard for those getting up to go to work in the morning to sleep. "We are afraid," she told the Council hearing, " that the Section embodies everything that we, the middle-class people, fear."

One tragedy in the voucher saga is that some black elected officials—Pennsylvania congressman Chaka Fattah, for instance—dismiss such heartfelt concerns as racist. Such attacks leave bitterness in their wake. "You know what bothers me?" one South Philadelphia resident confided in Representative Keller's office. "I've got two kids. You know why I don't have three? Because I can't afford it. And I see people with three or four kids and no father getting a subsidy to live in my neighborhood—which means I'm paying to help them. And complaining about it makes me a racist." Being black doesn't shield you from being labeled with the R-word when you attack Section 8. African-American local officials in predominantly black Matteson, Illinois, report that they've been accused of racism over the city's decision to advise landlords that it may be better to leave a unit temporarily vacant than to rent to a voucher holder.

Harvard sociologist William Julius Wilson famously argued that class, not race, is the most powerful divide that separates Americans today. Frank Arceneaux, an African-American state trooper who owns a home in Matteson and rental property in nearby Richton Park, illustrates Wilson's point as well as anyone—and he puts the lie to the idea that opposition to vouchers is inherently racist. He's become afraid to send his wife to collect rents in the apartment building he owns because of the presence of Section 8 tenants at a building nearby. "Section 8 brings a life-style from the city that I tried to escape from," he says. "It's a value difference. It's all single mothers. They let their kids stay out until midnight. I admit I'm prejudiced against blacks—blacks who don't honor my values. I can understand white flight. I'd like to fly, too, but I can't. I've maxed out my income. I'm not gonna get rich all of a sudden. I've got to stay and fight."

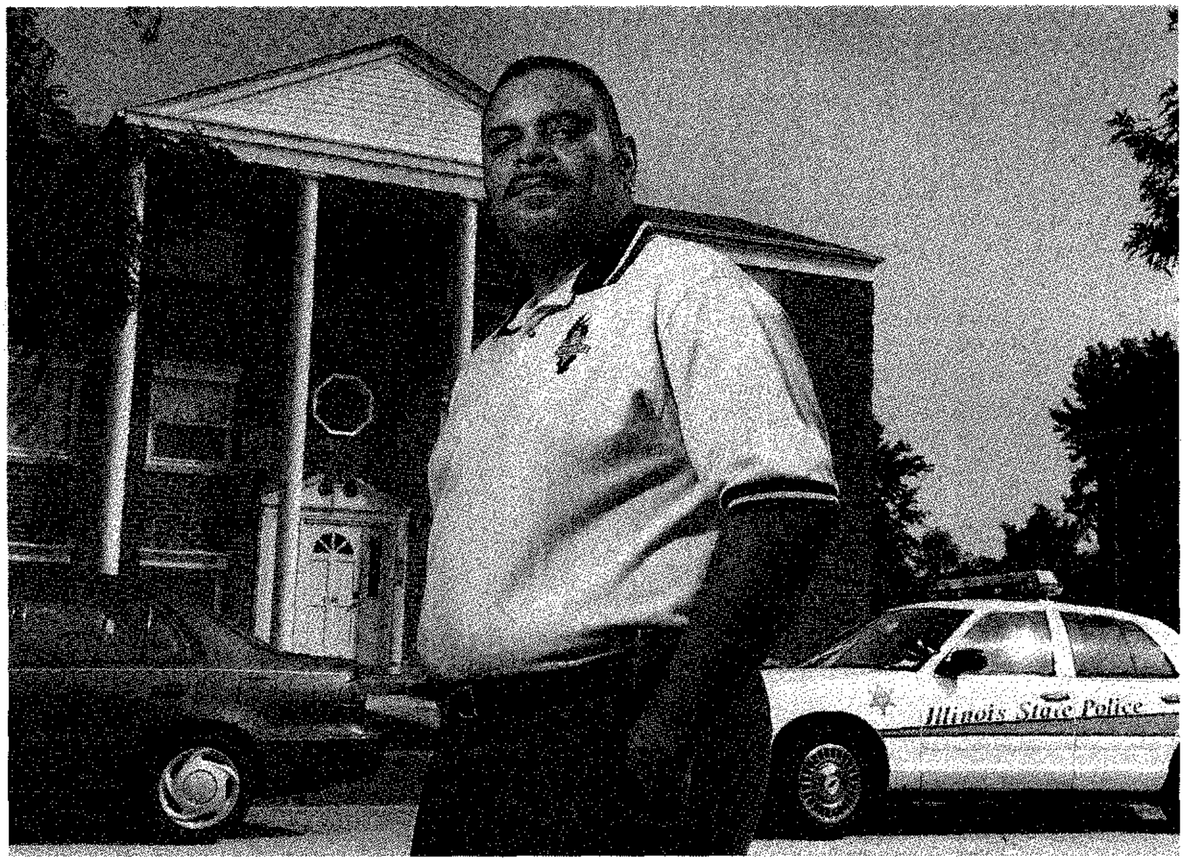
Critics of the voucher program propose three fixes, all of dubious efficacy. The first is the idea of "deconcentrating" voucher holders. South suburban Chicago congressman Jerry Weller (who represents Riverdale) went so far as to propose a 20 percent cap on voucher holders in a given census tract. Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr., who holds a key seat on the House Housing Committee, endorsed a version of the idea of a cap, or moratorium, in a letter to the *Chicago Sun-Times* last December. In a bid to placate his significant constituency in the southern suburbs, Jackson proposed that the moratorium apply to any "South Side neighborhood or southern suburb that is experiencing zero or negative economic growth"—a tough standard to meet in these prosperous times. But to spread out Section 8 tenants into other, wealthier neighborhoods would require HUD to pay even higher reimbursements to landlords—a tough sell to many legislators—and even so, landlords with other prospective tenants to choose from would resist voucher holders. It is so difficult to place voucher tenants in so-called nontraditional areas that a south suburban Chicago nonprofit dedicated to that purpose—Housing Choice Partners—has been able to place only 225 of 9,200 voucher holders outside the Section 8 corridors, despite personal counseling of voucher holders and assurance to landlords that the prospective tenants were not disruptive.

A second proposed improvement, also aimed at deconcentrating voucher tenants, is to align the value of vouchers more closely with actual private rents in a given neighborhood, to make the program less of a windfall for the owners of marginal housing. But for landlords willing to amass large blocks of such properties to rent to Section 8 tenants, the guarantee of even average rents in poor neighborhoods, deposited directly in their bank accounts each month by the government, will remain a temptation. It's an easy, risk-free way to make money.

The last proposed fix is to screen tenants. In fact, housing authorities already have legislative license to screen out those who haven't paid their rent in the past or who have criminal convictions, but they are reluctant to do so. Observes a senior HUD official closely familiar with the Section 8 program: "If a family's been evicted for disturbance—drinking, making noise—typically the authority won't screen those families out. Authorities tend not to like to do heavy screening, because it puts them in a position of having to justify their actions legally. They're worried about some Legal Aid lawyer who's going to rake over their files and make their lives miserable." And if screening is difficult, revoking vouchers after a renter has moved in requires a major effort on the part of housing authorities. While housing authorities should certainly try to improve screening and should deal firmly with rowdy tenants, such screening cannot easily replace the screening that the housing market, left alone, would do to protect and sustain neighborhoods.

"'I can understand white flight. I'd like to fly, too, but I can't. I've maxed out my income. I've got to stay and fight.'"

But maybe we would do better to rethink this issue completely. We could house the same population we now house with vouchers—primarily single mothers—in existing public housing projects. But we could transform those projects into something very different from what they are now—into institutional homes where unwed mothers could stay only for a fixed period of time (perhaps two years), during which time they might get instruction in parenting, along with encouragement to marry



State trooper Frank Arceneaux hates the voucher program: "Section 8 brings a life-style that I tried to escape from. It's a value difference. It's all single mothers. They let their kids stay out until midnight."

the fathers of their children. Such a system envisions personal and cultural change, not just redistribution of income. In this respect, even no system at all would be better than Section 8 vouchers. Were the public to withdraw the support that enables single-parent families to get their own apartments, the women might be forced to consider marriage or to live with their own extended families, which might provide more supervision for the children. As matters stand now, a young woman who has children as a teenager can qualify, at age 18, for her own voucher-paid house, and she can keep it in perpetuity. If her income is low because she has no work experience, she would get top priority.

Even if we were to accept the dubious Johnson administration view that the poor need more income in order to afford better housing, that doesn't mean that rent vouchers would be the right way to provide it. Through the Earned Income Tax Credit, poor working families today can qualify for tax "refunds" larger than the amount actually withheld from their paychecks. If we're convinced that we must provide financial support to the working poor, far better to do it this way—or to reduce the regressive Social Security tax—than to provide housing vouchers. Even with such an income supplement, a household would still have to strive and save to find a home in a better neighborhood. Its relationship with a landlord would not be distorted. It would have to adopt the habits of thrift and discipline that would win favor with middle-class neighbors.

What our experience with Section 8 vouchers teaches us is simply this: replacing an old failure with a new one should not be confused with success. ■

Horatio Alger: The Moral of the Story

Stefan Kanfer

Horatio Alger Jr. was the biggest American media star of his day. Though nineteenth-century best-seller lists were impressionistic—and the sale of 10,000 volumes was deemed a publishing triumph in those days—readers bought at least 200 million copies of his books, placing him in the Stephen King category.

Today all but three of those hundred-odd novels are out of print. Alger himself is considered a dinosaur of popular literature, a writer whose "strive and succeed" philosophy is as cringe-making as that of his contemporary, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow ("Life is real! Life is earnest! / And the grave is not its goal"). A pity: for Alger was at the forefront of a phenomenally successful experiment in social reform and improvement, a broad movement that inspired poor kids to take advantage of America's social mobility and that led tens of thousands of New York's post-Civil War juvenile delinquents into productive lives. Those who care about the future of the city's poor should re-examine Alger's message: it worked once, and could work again.

Given the tendency of nineteenth-century novelists to thinly disguised autobiography, you might guess that Alger himself was the rags-to-riches hero of his own life. But the real Horatio Alger story, as compelling as any novel, is darker. The sickly child of a Unitarian minister in Marlborough, Massachusetts, Horatio, born in 1832, was always the smallest in his class and far from an academic star—mainly because, a stutterer, he hated to recite the answers even when he knew them. Still, his record was good enough for admission to Harvard. There his academic achievements were in inverse proportion to his size (5′2″): he won academic prizes, experimented with verse and fiction, and regarded the entire four years as a period of "unmixed happiness."

Decades would pass before he found such contentment again. Upon graduation, he tried to write for a living, but book and magazine sales were meager, and after five years he entered the Harvard Divinity School. In 1860, the newly minted Reverend Alger signed on as minister of the First Parish Unitarian Church of Brewster on Cape Cod, supplementing an $800 annual income by freelancing articles and stories. He had just started to manage the two careers of preacher and writer when catastrophe struck.

It was of his own making. A 13-year-old told his parents that the new parson had molested him. An investigation began. Another lad stated that he had been similarly assailed. Faced with charges of "the abominable and revolting crime of gross familiarity with boys," the accused was allowed to resign—with the proviso that he leave town at once.

Some time afterward, Alger wrote a poem, "Friar Anselmo's Sin." It began:

Friar Anselmo (God's grace may he win)
Committed one sad day a deadly sin.

Alone and in misery, the monk (whose iniquity is never specified) happens across a wounded traveler and gives him aid. An angel materializes, assuring the sinner that he has taken the right path. The chance for atonement is at hand:

Thy guilty stains shall be washed white again,
By noble service done thy fellow-men.

The fugitive repaired to New York City in the spring of 1866. Though never to wear the cloth again, he resolved to live out the Christian ideal, expiating his sin by saving others. How exactly he would do it, he didn't yet know.

The Manhattan he came to was the city of Gilded Age robber barons, of Boss Tweed, and of millions of ambitious newcomers, drawn by the postwar boom and its seemingly boundless opportunities. Below the prosperity, though, was another New York, a nighttown of squalid slums that travelers compared to Calcutta. There was scarcely a block in the poorest areas that a pedestrian could negotiate "without climbing over a heap of trash or, in rain, wading through a bed of slime," as Otto Bettmann describes it in *The Good Old Days, They Were Terrible*. To the physical pollution corresponded a moral one. Many streets were so dangerous that policemen hesitated to walk them alone. "Most

Mark the Match Boy
Luck and Pluck

BETTMAN/CORBIS

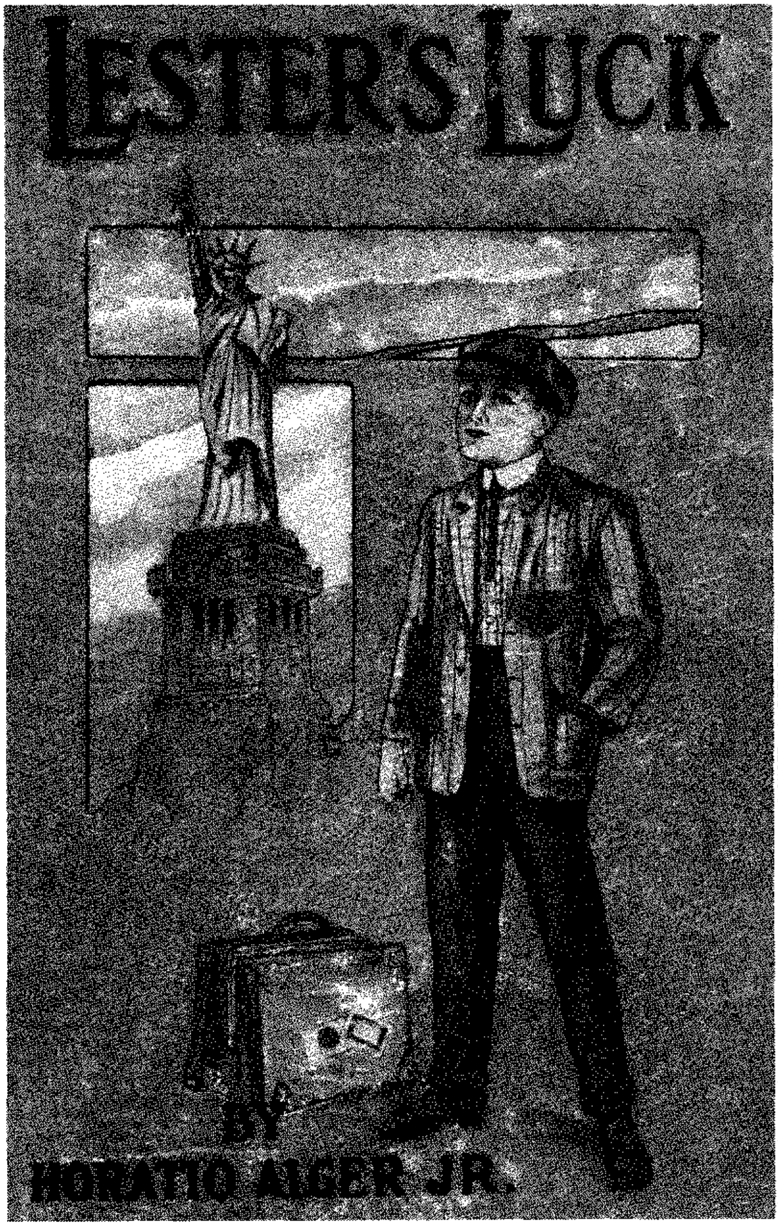
Horatio Alger Jr. and his brainchildren

of my friends are investing in revolvers and carry them about at night," a Gramercy Park resident noted in his diary—and the Park was one of the city's better neighborhoods.

The New York City street urchin entered the national consciousness in those years. More than 60,000 neglected or abandoned kids ran unsupervised in the streets, partly because of the fallout from the tremendous wave of immigration from Ireland and continental Europe that was taking place. With immigration came a social pathology of maladjustment to the New World: families that fell apart; alcoholism and drug abuse (opium could be purchased across the counter); out-of-wedlock pregnancies and, inevitably, neglected children; physical and sexual abuse of every imaginable kind. Beside the foreign immigrants, there were the underaged and unacknowledged casualties of the Civil War. "The parents may have been killed or simply took the opportunity to abandon them," Alger wrote of them. "Some, apparently, were abandoned where their parents had them. Somehow they made their way to the city, and now accept constant struggle as a part of their daily lives."

What was to be done about the juveniles likely to die on the streets or end up behind bars? Social worker Etta Angel Wheeler found one answer, when she came upon a child wandering naked and unclaimed. The legal authorities to whom she appealed refused aid. In desperation, she turned to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which determined that, "the child being an animal," it would grant shelter and protection.

Practical philanthropists came up with better answers and put them into effect. Rev. Charles Loring Brace mused on what to do about the city's "great numbers of children sleeping about the streets at night, in boxes or under stairways." One cold night, he saw "some ten or a dozen little homeless creatures piled together trying to keep each other warm over a grating outside *The Sun* office. There used to be a mass of them at *The Atlas*, sleeping in the lobby and cellar, until printers drove them away by pouring water over them." In response, he founded the Children's Aid Society, designed to take homeless or abused juveniles out of the city and place them upstate or, better still, out West. There they might be instilled with a " 'sense of



HORATIO ALGER COLLECTION/NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, DEKALB, ILLINOIS(3)

property,' and the desire of accumulation, which, economists tell us, is the base of all civilization." At the same time, John Hughes, New York's first Catholic archbishop, set up parochial schools and a residential institution called the Catholic Protectory, which brought up abandoned or orphaned children to be useful members of society. (See "Once We Knew How to Rescue Poor Kids," Autumn 1998.) At the heart of such institutions lay the recognition that a civilized society is only as sound as its youngest members.

Horatio Alger, both as a novelist and a philanthropist, belongs to this effort of reclamation. He, too, asked himself what could be done about these homeless children. Looking for the answer, he wandered through the city's worst neighborhoods.

He noted one encounter with a boy who saw him consulting his gold watch.

"You must be real rich," said the youth. "I bet it cost you a pooty penny."

Alger explained that the watch was a graduation present from his parents. "It belonged to my grandfather. Perhaps one day you'll get a fine watch."

"Not much chance. I got no family to gimme, and I ain't about to be adopted by a rich man, unless yer willin."

"Don't you have a home?"

"None to speak of. There's a crate with some straw in a yard back of Pearl Street, but a big feller beat me to it, so I was bummin' it last night. Sand boxes is swell, 'cuz yer can get it up all around yer. But in winter nothing beats them steam gratin's. They's just like a featherbed."

At a church service in Five Points, the city's worst slum, Alger struck up a conversation with several boys, listening closely to their patois. As Horatio interviewed them, these "street arabs" spoke of broken homes, violent confrontations with parents, rocky futures. He saw how their cocky attitudes masked a profound despair.

Alger advised them to improve themselves, to get a job with a future instead of hanging about the streets, squandering whatever came their way from shining shoes or picking pockets. Some nodded in agreement, expressing the desire to change their lives; more were content to take life as they found it.

Why, Alger pondered, did individuals subjected to the same conditions turn out very differently? One boy might become a thief, a sociopath, even a killer. His neighbor, subjected to the same poverty and broken home, might aim to be a decent, upright citizen. What was the difference between them? What saved certain boys, he came to believe, was *character*—a quality that gave them the strength to resist sloth and temptation. But was this inborn? In that case determinism won the day, and change was out of the question. Or, given the right opportunity, could a dispossessed lad win his share of the American dream simply by *willing* the change? The latter, Alger thought—but only if the boy stopped viewing himself as a victim and instead sought the proper advice.

As these boys spoke—and as Alger meditated upon the worst crime of the slums: the stealing of childhood from children—an idea came to him. He would be Brother Anselmo *redivivus*. He had sinned against youths; now he would rescue them and in the process save himself. He would do it as a novelist—a novelist who would, as he put it, "depict the inner life and represent the feelings and emotions of these little waifs of city life . . . thus to excite a deeper and more widespread sympathy in the public mind, as well as to exert a salutary influence upon the class of whom he is writing, by setting before them inspiring examples of what energy, ambition, and an honest purpose may achieve."

Out of this resolve, Alger wrote *Ragged Dick* in 1866. He would pack an emotional punch in this book, graphically displaying the horror of juvenile life on the streets. The idea that there were parents who could abandon or abuse their children was new to many Americans. Alger would disabuse them by going face-to-face with the problems of the age, introducing two youths whose lives were modeled on real people he had met in his travels.

The first, Johnny Nolan, is a ne'er-do-well. He has "a father living, but he might as well have been without one. Mr. Nolan was a confirmed drunkard and spent the greater part of his wages for liquor. His potations made him ugly, and inflamed a temper never very sweet, working him up sometimes to such a pitch of rage that Johnny's life was in danger. Some months before he had thrown a flatiron at his son's head with such terrific force that unless Johnny dodged, he would not have lived long enough to obtain a place in our story." Yet that place is not a happy one, for Johnny stays surly and resistant to alteration.

The other character, "Ragged Dick," is a striver, anxious to work his way up from boot blacking to something better. Barely literate at first, Dick Hunter finds a counselor his own age, although far better educated. Henry Fosdick (like Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain) is the son of a printer and familiar with the dictionary. Dick tells him, "I don't want to be ignorant. I want to grow up 'spectable." Thus motivated, the ignorant youth learns the values of honesty, integrity, education, and hard work—including work on himself. He picks up rudimentary arithmetic skills. He improves his vocabulary and discovers the value of books. He comes to bathe more frequently, to dress better, to save his money.

Dick needs only one break. It comes when he chances to be at the South Ferry slip when a little boy falls in the water. Without hesitation, Dick plunges in and saves the child from drowning, an instant demonstration of resourcefulness, courage, self-risk—in short, character. The grateful father, a prosperous businessman, interviews the rescuer. Satisfied that well-mannered Dick has the right stuff, he inquires: "How would you like to enter my counting-room as clerk, Richard?"

The next week, en route to a new life, our hero is cheerfully reminded that he can no longer go by his sobriquet. Says Henry Fosdick, "You must drop that name and think of yourself now as—"

"Richard Hunter, Esq."

"A young gentleman on the way to fame and fortune," adds his friend.

Naive? Simplistic? To the jaded, perhaps. But to anyone familiar with urban poverty, the

Alger novel was a blueprint of salvation a century before Martin Luther King stated his belief that what mattered was the not the color of one's skin but the content of one's character. Many of Alger's contemporaries shared this belief, including, manifestly, Theodore Roosevelt. But it is a view not shared by the liberal mind-set of today.

Case in point: *Gotham,* a monumental recent history of New York by Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace. Their book goes out of its way to disparage Alger's "'secularized version of salvation' which demanded ongoing subordination, not manly independence from the once-scrappy Dick. . . . Alger's is a creed for clerks." This is precisely the elite attitude that condemns youths to a lifetime in the ghetto by egging them on from the safe sidelines, as their turned-around baseball caps, boom-boxes, and in-your-face demeanor compel employers to look elsewhere for help.

Alger did not praise servility; he lauded reliability and responsibility. It was just those virtues that self-made author and publisher Elbert Hubbard stressed in his celebrated nineteenth-century work, *A Message to Garcia.* Hubbard's observation about the reckless youth of New York jibes with Alger's, and it is still germane today: "What boy well raised can compare with your street gamin who has the knowledge and the shrewdness of a grown-up broker? But the Arab never becomes a man." And he never lacks for those who romanticize the dead-end culture of the slums and its "scrappy," doomed personae.

Ragged Dick was serialized in a magazine called *Student and Schoolmate.* Each installment picked up additional readers; published in hard cover the following year, the book became a sensation. Young readers clamored for more moral fables; these seemed a blueprint for success in a society in the process of defining itself. Alger was only too happy to provide sequels.

The classic Alger plot seldom varied: a youth of humble origins makes his way in the city by virtue of grit and toil. Luck usually plays its part, but to Alger, fortune was something to be enticed and manipulated. He would have agreed with Hector Berlioz's observation: "One must have the talent for luck." And, naturally, the pluck to go along with it. With these assets a boy could compete with any other youth, even one born with money and a good name.

Take *Mark the Match Boy,* for example, a book born out of Alger's happening to overhear a boy refer to himself as "a timber merchant in a small way, sellin' matches." Mark, a common lad, is accused of stealing, though the thief is actually a well-born kid named Roswell. Their boss confronts them both:

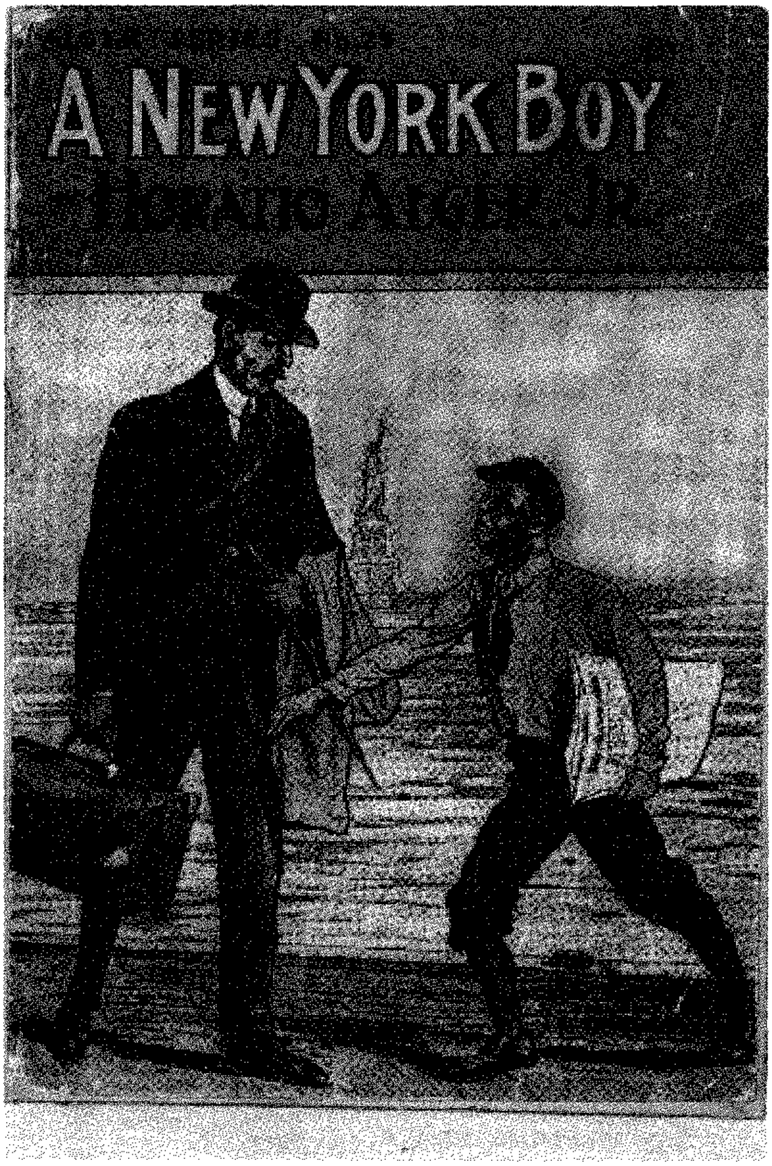
"There seems to be a conflict of evidence here," said Mr. Baker.

"I hope the word of a gentleman's son is worth more than that of a match boy," said Roswell haughtily.

Ah, but is it? Not when a witness appears, informing Mr. Baker that Roswell had once given him a counterfeit bill. Before tale's end, Roswell is disgraced and forced to apologize to Mark.

In Alger's view, square dealing and independence formed the basis of the American experiment. Hadn't Benjamin Franklin written, "God helps those who help themselves"? Hadn't Thomas Paine observed, "When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember that virtue is not hereditary"? Hadn't Abraham Lincoln stated that, "Truth is the best vindication against slander"? Didn't Ralph Waldo Emerson instruct, "Discontent is the want of self-reliance; it is infirmity of will"? Alger's novels aimed to instill the idea behind those phrases into America's children.

Like Dickens, Alger tried to improve the lot of poor children not only through his crusading novels but through his own philanthropic activities. He supported, and raised funds for, the Five Points Mission, the YMCA, the Children's Aid Society, and the Newsboys' Lodging House, a kind of residential settlement house where boys could find shelter from the city's violence and depravity. With luck, they might even learn the values of knowledge and propriety. "You shouldn't be fooled, Mr. Alger," one of the Lodging's founders, philanthropic clergyman Charles Loring Brace, warned the author on one of his many visits to the institution. "We've got lads cunning and sharpened by all the friction of street life. Some are merely young, ignorant and friendless, but many have already tasted fruits of vice and crime. Their



friends are often the forlorn prostitute and mature criminal." Though the boys regarded the shy, balding visitor as "a prayin' man" brought in to lecture them on the seven deadly sins, after prolonged exposure they accepted Alger as a yarn spinner who could keep them entertained for hours, retailing stories about bad lads who made good. They made him a kind of honorary Newsboy.

Animated by a fury at social injustice, Alger agitated for child welfare both as a novelist and a citizen. He set his sights, for example, on the then-rampant "*padrone* system." In this long-forgotten version of slavery, rural Italians were assured that their children could find good jobs overseas; *padrones* would see to their welfare until the youngsters caught on in the New World. Scarcely had the immigrants stepped off the boat, however, when the patrons crammed them into overcrowded quarters and sent them out into the street as beggars or street musicians, all day, every day. All profits went to their keepers.

Alger took it upon himself to lobby lawmakers about the system. Simultaneously, he began work on an exposé in fictive form: *Phil the Fiddler*, about a casualty of the *padrones*. The *padrones* sent veiled threats. Alger was unmoved. Thugs ransacked his apartment as an admonition, but Alger would not back off. *Phil* was read by the children of politicians and reformers, talk began around dinner tables, and the following year the New York State Legislature passed a law against "cruelty to children." Two years later, the *padrone* system was no more.

Yet writing and agitating scarcely began to tap the little man's prodigious energy. From his apartment at 223 West 34th Street, he sent out checks and wrote to friendly businessmen and colleagues, trying to place worthy juveniles in decent jobs. In one typical letter, he told a friend about two boys in need. The first, he thought, would be unsuitable "for a lawyer's office, as his education is not sufficiently good, and he is only 14. I have a partial promise from my tailor to take him in the fall as he learned something of tailor-

RISEN FROM
THE RANKS
ALGER

ing when an inmate of the Boys Catholic Protectory, and I will help him as he needs through the summer. There is another boy who would like the position in the lawyer's office. He graduates this summer from the public schools. He is an orphan, but is better than the other, having older brothers who took care of him." In the 1880s, he informally adopted three orphan boys and incorporated their stories into his novels.

Alger's writings caught the attention of Joseph Seligman, one of the city's most prominent financiers. Impressed with the writer after a long interview, Seligman hired him to tutor his children in Greek and Latin. He proved to be such a skilled pedagogue that Seligman recommended him to friends. So it was that Horatio came to tutor Benjamin Cardozo, later a Supreme Court justice. It is not much of a stretch to imagine that many of the moral lessons Cardozo learned as an apt pupil were to affect his decisions on the bench.

Even as Alger entered middle age, with a push-broom moustache and a stooped posture that made him seem even smaller, he seemed ignorant of the word "fatigue." He continued to churn out novels about the city and about the West, where he made occasional trips in search of new material. In the summer of 1881, after James Garfield was assassinated, Alger dropped everything, working night and day for three weeks to write a life of the slain president, the first "quickie" biography in American history. Naturally, it was a Horatio Alger story: *From Canal Boy to President*.

Horatio then returned to a new series of novels for the young. Like *Canal Boy*, these, too, were best-sellers. Virtually all the narratives followed the template of his earlier efforts: a youth is beset by destitution and the temptations of the wicked city. Soon he is betrayed by a trusted associate. But with the help of a wise mentor he picks himself up, dusts himself off, and, with honesty and diligence, ultimately triumphs over circumstance. That was what Alger's public demanded, and he saw no reason to disappoint them.

Although the craving for this master plot diminished with the years, Alger's celebrity was too strong to fade. Late in the century, he delightedly informed a friend, "A new game called Authors will be issued by the U.S. Playing Card company, in Cincinnati, in the fall. I am in it." Thrilled as he was, he remained a realist, well aware of such rivals for boys' attention as Oliver Optic, G. A. Henty, and Capt. Mayne Read. Upon reading of Louisa May Alcott's death in 1888, he wrote a friend, "What a pity she died so soon! She had no competitor as a writer for girls. There are plenty of good writers for boys. If there were not, I should occupy a larger niche and have more abundant sales." All the same, the royalties were generous enough throughout most of Alger's career, though he lavished little of the money he earned on himself, giving away much of it to private charities or to poor youths who came to him with tales of woe.

Ironically, it was after he succumbed to pneumonia in 1899 that the author assumed pantheon status. Sensing that the Alger name was still potent, publishers hired his editor, Edward Stratemeyer (who later headed the syndicate that produced the Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew series) to complete (and in some cases concoct) several unfinished books. These brought fresh attention to the name, and in the new century a second wave got under way.

The influence Alger had on American youth was incalculable. Men as different as journalist Heywood Broun, comedian Groucho Marx, and novelist Ernest Hemingway were fans. To Broun, Alger's books were inspiring, "simple tales of honesty triumphant." Marx remarked, "Horatio Alger's books conveyed a powerful message to me and many of my young friends—that if you worked hard at your trade, the big chance would eventually come. As a child I didn't regard it as a myth, and as an old man I think of it as the story of my life." Hemingway's sister Marcelline recalled that during their childhood, "There was one summer when Ernest couldn't get enough of Horatio Alger." Not that Alger's didacticism influenced Papa's prose style. But there must have been something in the writer's stress on grit and self-reliance that affected young Ernest, as it did so many of his contemporaries.

In the roaring twenties, though, Alger became as passé as the Stanley Steamer. In the Depression he fared no better; Nathaniel West's satirical 1934 novel, *A Cool Million*, sent Alger's plot in reverse, as the naive protagonist loses limb after limb seeking success among rapacious capitalists. Two years ago, the film adaptation of Hunter Thompson's 1971 novel, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, presented the antihero as "Horatio Alger gone mad on drugs in Las Vegas."

But if you listened closely, you could hear something beyond the jeers—something that sounded like the last laugh. In 1947, the Horatio Alger Association was born. Today the practical-minded group, no convocation of academic scholars, remains dedicated to recognizing American leaders who arose, like Alger heroes, from humble origins "through honesty, hard work, self-reliance and perseverance." With grants to U.S. high school students who have "faced and overcome great obstacles in their young lives," the Association encourages them to emulate such disparate members as Oprah Winfrey and Ray Kroc, Art Buchwald and Stan Musial, George Shearing and Colin Powell.

Browsing the Internet one afternoon, I found many old and well-read Horatio Alger novels for sale, most priced under $15. Some weeks later, I began reading the novels aloud to my children. We found them well-plotted, entertaining, and instructive, not at all the righteous antiques that I had been led to believe. Almost every chapter ends with a cliff-hanger, and all of us could hardly wait for the next night to find out what happened. The conclusions never failed to produce an emotional satisfaction and a feeling that what the author was selling—independence, forbearance, square dealing—was well worth buying. In the Clinton era, when shame and remorse have almost lost their meaning, the turnaround of Horatio Alger's personal life is instructive, and the message of his work invaluable. ■

Feminists and Their Enemies

Harry Stein

Back in July, the *New York Times* published a book review that surely had jaws dropping on both sides of the cultural divide. Written by Richard Bernstein and headlined BOYS, NOT GIRLS, AS SOCIETY'S VICTIMS, it was an extremely sympathetic treatment of Christina Hoff Sommers's *The War Against Boys*, subtitled, in case anyone might fail to get the message, *How Misguided Feminism Is Harming Our Young Men*.

What was going on here? In the ideological mosh pit that is today's *New York Times*, radical feminist thought has long been

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Urbanities

all but immune from honest scrutiny, let alone criticism. And Sommers, utterly devastating in her critique of the campaign against male nature, has long been at the top of the radical sisterhood's enemies list.

Was this an aberration or the beginnings of a shift in the *Times*'s policy, a faint crack in the bunker of elite opinion?

Well, let's not go overboard. Understanding the way things unfold at the *New York Times* takes the subtlety of a Kremlinologist, and with heavy-handed sixties-enthusiast Pinch Sulzberger in charge, the paper is unlikely to return to its classical liberal roots anytime soon. But it's a funny thing about intellectual fraud: keeping it up over the long term is exhausting and dispiriting. Once honest discussion breaks loose, it can be hard to hold down.

At the very least, such a piece serves to illustrate, by contrast, how woefully short on common decency and common sense the paper's coverage of feminism has generally been. Indeed, of all the orthodoxies the paper has so aggressively promoted over the years, from its casting of single parenthood as a triumph of diversity to its insistence in the face of ready data and common sense that AIDS is everyone's disease, none has enjoyed quite the degree of special handling as the feminists' drive to remake humanity.

Over the years, *Times* readers have so come to take this bias for granted that even the most daring leaps in logic and the grossest disregard of fairness tend to pass unnoticed. Underlying it all has been the pretense that radical feminist groups, notably the National Organization for Women (which at its height had fewer members than there are female subscribers to *Playboy*), actually speak for all women. A quick check of Lexis-Nexis reveals that over the past decade NOW has been cited in 802 articles, while, as a quick contrast, the conservative Independent Women's Forum has been mentioned a mere seven times. (Just as telling is the nature of the IWF references. Three report, falsely, that the IWF spurred Ken Starr to write a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of Paula Jones, and two others are *retractions* of that story—which *Times* reporters kept repeating anyway.)

Of course, what matters—at the *Times*, anyway—is that among the small percentage of women whose views NOW actually represents are the overwhelming majority of those who write and edit at the paper itself: women, that is, who are militantly pro-choice and for whom career is an all-consuming priority. Indeed, in its varied permutations, the worldview they represent can now be found in every corner of the paper, evident not merely in the the almost uniformly flattering news stories and photos of Hillary Clinton or the seriousness accorded the likes of a Susan Sarandon, but in a sports department that has made a prominently placed photo of a female Little League player an annual rite of spring.

But as these things go, the quintessential *Times* world view comes across most undisguisedly in the paper's *Book Review* sections, for here no one even has to pretend to objectivity.

Hardly surprisingly, the literary efforts of staff feminists tend to receive especially fulsome praise: people like Susan Chira, the *Times*'s deputy foreign editor, who for years covered child-related issues, in which role she systematically promoted day care while failing to cover studies that documented its potentially deleterious effects. When her 1998 autobiographical tome, *A Mother's Place: Choosing Work and Family Without Guilt or Blame*, took the same tack, the *Times*'s critic lauded it as a "splendid book . . . [that] makes an eloquent, well-documented case that motherhood does not require martyrdom."

Then there's Natalie Angier, the Pulitzer Prize–winning *Times* science writer, whose *Woman: An Intimate Geography* got special handling even by the *Times*'s version of standards. One of those who sees all existence through the prism of gender, Angier uses her role as science writer to scour nature endlessly for evidence of female superiority and male inferiority. The *Book Review* editors originally assigned her book to the well-known evolutionary biologist Helen Cronin, but they killed that review after it turned out "too negative"—Cronin later reported she'd found Angier's work "totally idiotic. She uses phrases like 'the vagina as a model for the universe itself.'" No problem. The book was

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

reviewed in the daily *Times* by Stanford professor Marilyn Yalom, author of *A History of the Breast*, who pronounced it "dazzling . . . supported by rigorous scientific underpinnings."

Hardly incidentally, a couple of years earlier, Angier had reviewed Yalom's breast book for the *Book Review*, calling it "a fascinating cultural, political and artistic history of our most symbolically freighted body part."

On the other hand, women authors who challenge cherished feminist truths—and, worse, who call women to account for problems ascribed to the bugaboo of patriarchy—almost all meet with sharp contempt. *City Journal* contributing editor Wendy Shalit, whose *A Return to Modesty* is a cry for courtship and marriage rather than recreational sex, found herself belittled by the *Times*'s critic as "the self-appointed spokeswoman for the moral minority." Another *Times* reviewer tells us acidly that Stephanie Gutmann, whose *A Kinder, Gentler Military* gives chapter and verse on the crumbling of standards in the feminized military, "flies in the face of evidence—read Margaret Mead—that both women and men can be fierce in defending themselves."

Even more despised, if possible, are those who've made the case that Chira and her ilk find so deeply threatening: that children pay a devastating price when their mothers make them a lesser priority than their careers. When Danielle Crittenden passionately argued in *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us* that *Ms.*-era feminism had badly failed women by seeking to deny their innate desire for children and family, the *Times*'s critic dismissed her out of hand: "First, the good news: [this book] is very short." When the academic Elizabeth Fox Genovese's *Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life* conducted in-depth interviews with women around the country to make largely the same case and urge a more inclusive "family feminism," the *Times* called her exhaustively researched book "not really a sustained argument but a series of pronouncements reeled off at a manic pace.") Many other works, such as ex-lawyer Carolyn Graglia's superb defense of traditional womanhood, *Domestic Tranquility: A Brief Against Feminism*, pass unmentioned in the *Times* at all and, as a result, tend to attract scant notice elsewhere.

Even on those rare occasions when a *Times* review takes a stance seemingly at odds with feminist orthodoxy, it can be counted on to rip conservative women who've held the same stance all along—thus, with characteristic audacity, letting those who'd had it wrong for so long off the hook. The publication this fall of psychologist Judith Wallerstein's *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* justly received lengthy and laudatory page-one treatment in the Sunday *Book Review*. Yet stuck in the piece, almost as a self-protective afterthought, was a single paragraph slamming Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher's *The Case for Marriage*, which makes many of the same points. (See "Why Marriage Is Good for You," page 76.) While Wallerstein (whose "goal," we are reassured, "is not to condemn divorce" and one of whose collaborators is "a regular contributor to *The New York Times*") is rightly celebrated for helping bring on the "dawning recognition" that divorce leaves deep and enduring scars on children, Waite and Gallagher, who *never* bought into the liberal fiction that happy divorced parents make happy kids, are somehow "less subtle and humane." Though they offer a wealth of evidence in support of marriage, "it's hard to know who is supposed to read this book or what purpose it might serve."

But feminists have never been able to shrug off Christina Hoff Sommers with such casual injustice. Because she was a well-regarded academic with a liberal pedigree, and because of the character of her attacks, she has from the start presented feminist stalwarts with a unique set of problems.

Drawn into the fight a decade or so ago, while a philosophy professor at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, Sommers had been startled, then alarmed, by what she was hearing at feminist academic conferences—both the virulence of the anti-male, anti-family rhetoric and the shoddy thinking of those getting by as "feminist scholars." "These women would just toss around these ludicrous facts and figures," she recalls, "and no one ever challenged them—because if you did, you were branded a traitor and a reactionary, and your career was in jeopardy."

Her writings on academic feminism, more like insiders' reports, soon made her a pariah in that community; but it was the 1994 publication of her first book, *Who Stole Feminism?*, that turned the genial Sommers into feminism's Public Enemy Number One. Chronicling the systematic radicalization of a noble concept—the legal and social equality of the sexes—by what she called "gender feminists," the book attacked the very foundations of the shaky feminist edifice, taking dead aim not only at the misbegotten feminist leadership but at an uncritical press that never called them to account. "To rally women to their cause," as she wrote of feminist zealotry, "it is not enough to remind us that many brutal and selfish men hurt women. They must persuade us that the system itself sanctions male brutality. They must convince us that the oppression of women, sustained from generation to generation, is a structural feature of our society."

What drew most attention to the book, and sent her foes into a defensive froth, was its focus on how feminist activists chronically abuse statistics in the propagation of their ideology. Particularly striking was the notice she called to the ludicrous claim—repeated in Gloria Steinem's *Revolution from Within* and Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* and dutifully broadcast by Ann Landers—that 150,000 American women die of anorexia every year. In fact, the actual number turned out to be fewer than 100. Then, too, there was the fantastic charge, made by NOW's Patricia Ireland and picked up by, among many others, the *Boston Globe*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and *Time* magazine, that domestic violence against pregnant women was responsible for more birth defects than all other causes *combined*. Dogged researcher though she is, in such cases Sommers didn't even have to break into a sweat to find the truth: on the phony birth defects story, all it took was a single phone call to the March of Dimes, ostensibly the source of the statistic, to elicit a firm "We have never seen this research before."

In a furious counteroffensive, feminist activists fell back on the tactics that had long proven so effective: they viciously attacked, distorting Sommers's record and views, seeking to portray her as far, far from the mainstream. "[Rush] Limbaugh, a proven font of disinformation, and Sommers—who portrays herself as a stickler for accuracy—have developed a mutual admiration society," sneered one of the several feminist newsletters that at the time devoted entire issues to Sommers. "Pat Buchanan declared that 'Ms. Sommers is right on the mark.'" The American Association of University Women, one of Sommers's principal targets, actually set up a "Christina Hotline," suggesting ways to discredit her. Gabrielle Lange, the AAUW's media relations director, later had the effrontery to compare her to a Holocaust denier.

It was against this backdrop that the *Times Book Review* weighed in. "On the evidence of this book," began its critique of *Who Stole Feminism?*, "Christina Hoff Sommers is a wallflower at feminist conferences. In revenge, she attends them obsessively." The book, it declared in conclusion, "is so overwrought and underargued that it is unlikely to amuse or persuade."

But to her foes' horror, this attack soon turned into just more evidence—indeed, the strongest yet—for Sommers's argument about the cozy relationship between the elite media and the over-the-top feminists it refused to monitor responsibly. The *Times* identified its reviewer, Nina Auerbach, as the John Welsh Centennial Professor of History and Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. What the *Book Review* neglected to mention is that she also happened to be herself one of those feminist conference speakers Sommers skewered in the book, not by name, but clearly identifiable to anyone familiar with the event.

When this bit of deck stacking came to light, it set off a storm of protest, and not only from conservatives. *Washington Post* media critic Howard Kurtz ran a column on the affair, entitled: AT THE N.Y. TIMES: A REVIEW OR REVENGE? In short order, the *Book Review* was moved to run a spate of letters from angry readers. "*The New York Times* should not assign books to partisan reviewers who are too ideologically or emotionally involved with the subject matter to give an objective opinion," noted one. "When I read Ms. Auerbach's hatchet job," said another, "I was appalled by the personal attacks against Ms.

Sommers. Instead of reasoned disagreement, Ms. Auerbach delivered a vindictive tantrum."

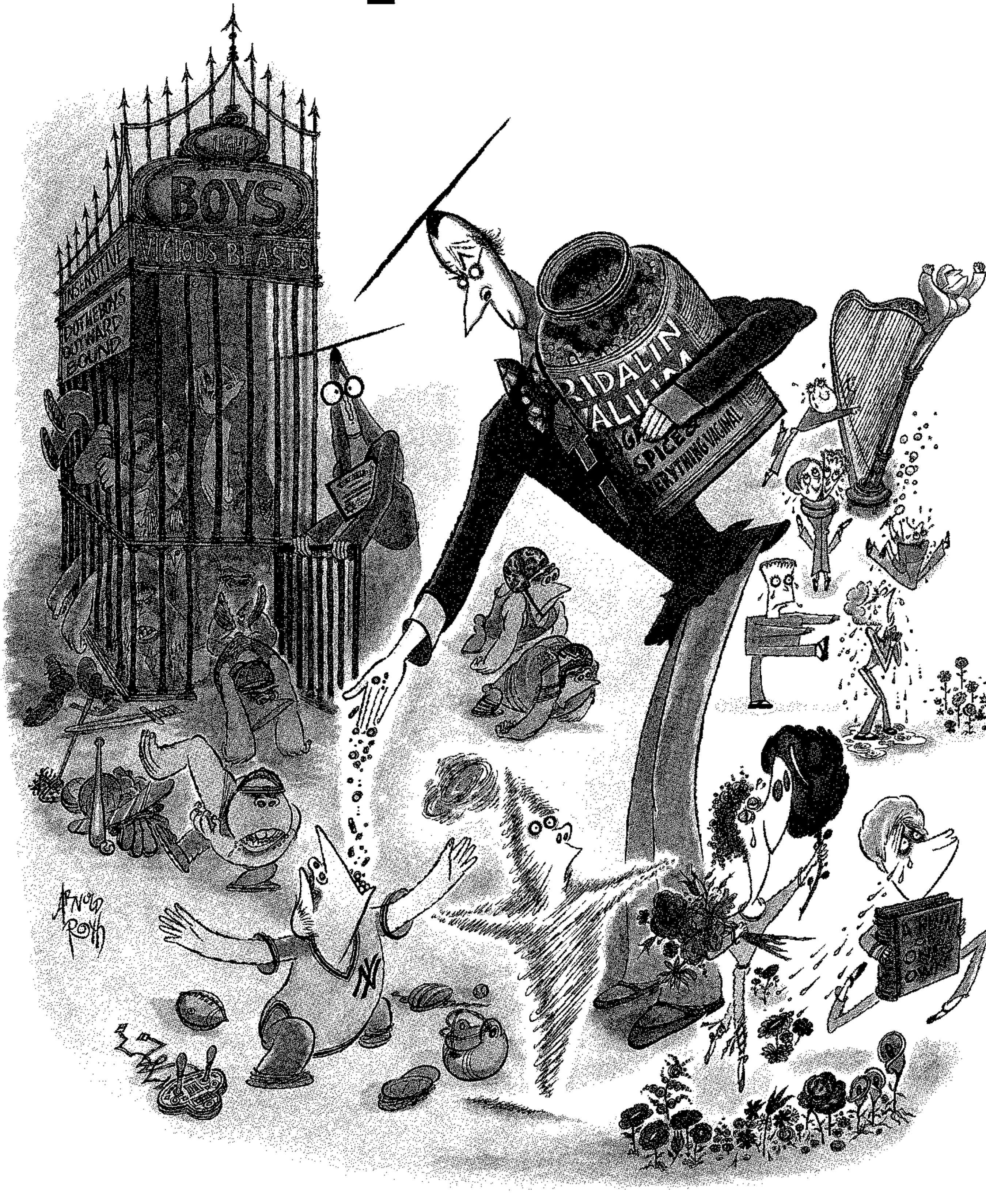
Auerbach and Rebecca Sinkler, the editor of the *Times Book Review*, publicly responded that, in essence, the complaints about the review were little more than anti-feminist sour grapes, and Sommers's contention that the reviewer had to have recognized herself in the book was pure fantasy. "Auerbach is a good and lively writer," wrote Sinkler on AOL's *New York Times* service, "and she can be outspoken in her views.... We like that in a reviewer.... *The Book Review* received many letters asking us why we would assign the book to someone named in it. The answer is, we wouldn't."

But from a PR perspective, things didn't get any better for the *Times* when it got around that Nina Auerbach was not merely "a good and lively writer" but had once been Rebecca Sinkler's teacher at Penn. When Sinkler left the *Book Review* not long afterward, it was hard to find anyone who'd argue the episode wasn't a factor. If the *Times*'s bias on feminist matters had long been obvious to anyone who cared to see, rarely had it been quite so glaringly overt.

As these things go, the controversy only helped *Who Stole Feminism?*'s sales. In fact, for all the savagery of the attacks Sommers endured, the book has achieved what most of her adversaries, and most conservative writers, for that matter, can only dream of: it has "made a difference." Under increased scrutiny, in recent years feminist leaders have had to be far more careful about throwing around inflammatory and gaseous statistics.

Not, God knows, that they've lost any of their twisted ardor—we're not talking miracles. Indeed, a compelling case

Urbanities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ARNOLD ROTH

can be made that for all the damage they've done to the culture over the past several decades, their most recent fixation—on boys—has been the most insidious yet.

For in the feminist worldview, notwithstanding their remarkable success in mainstreaming their ideology in offices and the military, at colleges and in TV sitcoms, things are not yet nearly as they should be. Males are still too traditionally . . . male. They're still too aggressive; they still like to play rough and lack sensitivity and "objectify" females. The solution? Since, according to doctrine, all such behavior is learned, a product of our sick culture, it must be attacked at its very root.

In brief, boys, too, are victims of patriarchy. We must systematically reprogram them—to be more like girls.

This is the doctrine that Sommers exposes and eviscerates in *The War Against Boys*—which, given its potential to engage otherwise apolitical mothers and fathers, arguably makes the new book even more dangerous to the zealots than was her first. Herself the mother of sons, Sommers appeals both to the head and the gut. "It is," as she writes, "a story of how we are turning against boys and forgetting a simple truth: that the energy, competitiveness, and corporal daring of normal, decent males are responsible for much of what is right in the world."

Obviously, ordinary people *never stopped* knowing that; as Chico Marx might've said of the feminists' relentless effort to have parents force dolls on indifferent little boys, "You gonna believe me or your own eyes?" And yet the book makes clear just how deeply, in the name of "gender equity," the anti-boy campaign has taken hold and how horrifying are its consequences in the real world.

Launched in earnest in the early nineties, the "gender equity" crusade came about largely in reaction to the work of one woman, feminist superstar Carol Gilligan of Harvard's Graduate School of Education. It was Gilligan who, as Sommers observes, via "groundbreaking studies" and best-selling books, "initiated the thinking about American girls as victimized, silenced Ophelias" and gave "intellectual respectability to reformers' efforts to reconstruct children's gender identities."

The essence of the Gilligan message on what the culture allegedly does to girls is summed up by the title of a characteristically laudatory *New York Times Magazine* profile that appeared in 1990: CONFIDENT AT 11, CONFUSED AT 16. Why, in early adolescence, do girls typically (in Gilligan's classic formulation) "lose their voice" and "go underground"? Basically, because they learn that to get by in a patriarchal world, it is best to be passive and submissive. Because, in fact, even within the confines of their own narrow world, they routinely find themselves shouted down in class by overly aggressive boys and ignored by boy-friendly teachers. A much-quoted report by the American Association of University Women entitled "How Schools Shortchange Girls" soon lent even greater authority to this idea, as did feminist academics like Myra and David Sadker, who wrote ominously of the schools' "secret sexist lessons and the quiet losses they engender."

As we know, in short order, network magazine shows and alarmist newspaper headlines were proclaiming the "crisis." True to form, the *Times* helped lead the way, proving particularly cooperative in promoting the holiday created by the Ms. Foundation to combat the collapse of female adolescent self-esteem. To date, Take Our Daughters to Work Day has garnered—count 'em—61 breathless mentions in the paper's pages.

But for those pushing the gender equity line, the key goal was legislative action, and that drive proved successful even beyond their most fevered dreams. By early 1994 Congress had passed, and Bill Clinton had signed, the Equity in Education Act, mandating gender-neutral textbooks and an end to sexual harassment at all school levels, and providing federal funds for the creation of an office of women's equity in the Department of Education to ensure that the feminist slant on things got a full hearing in texts and curricula.

Through it all, for all the attention they got, critics of the movement appeared not to exist. Only now did scattered reports appear, questioning if all this was really fair to boys. Most of these reports questioned whether the Take Our Daughters holiday ought to be expanded to include all children, an idea fiercely opposed by the *Ms.* Foundation. After all, by most key indicators—dropout rates and numbers of remedial students, suicide rates and percentages going on to college—wasn't it young males who were really in greatest jeopardy? Such a turn finally forced the feminists to address the boy issue directly: and this they have done with chilling resolve. Yes, they observed, boys are not healthy for girls and other living things, but ultimately *it is not their fault,* for society pressures them to conform to a soul-deadening, emotion-suppressing, female-subordinating definition of masculinity. And this, too, is a "crisis," calling for emergency measures.

In coming up with a solution, the feminists (as Lionel Trilling might have put it) seem to have taken as their manual *Ferdinand the Bull,* the children's tale that drives home its anti-macho message with sledgehammer delicacy. Just as Ferdinand accepts that he is a superior being for choosing to smell flowers instead of fight, so, in essence, the feminists declare boys' deranged "bull" nature to be merely a social construct, ugly but changeable.

Thus have they confidently moved to remake the educational system—indeed, the entire culture—to that end. From the earliest age, boys are to be subjected to a program aimed at stripping them of aggression, boisterousness, and irreverence.

In her book, Sommers relates in harrowing detail the extent to which this program is already in place. The key feminist hysteric she describes is someone almost no one has heard of: Katherine Hanson, who runs the Women's Educational Equity Act Publishing Center, and whose beliefs about the malevolence of the patriarchy are truly stunning. Among other things, Hanson has publicly charged that nearly 4 million women are beaten to death by men annually, which, if you're counting, makes 11,000 a day, 40 million a decade—basically, before long, every female in America. (The actual total of women murdered in the U.S. in 1996 was 3,631—most by complete strangers, some even by other women.)

It is to Hanson whom the Department of Education, under the Equity in Education Act, has given responsibility for providing "gender-fair" study materials to the nation's schools. Believing as she does that "our educational system is a primary carrier of the dominant culture's assumptions," she has inundated teachers and schoolchildren with literature portraying normal boys as would-be batterers, harassers, and rapists. Her anti-harassment teacher manuals bear such titles as *Quit It!*, aimed at grades K-3 and, for slightly older children, *Girls and Boys Getting Along: Teaching Sexual Harassment Prevention in the Elementary Classroom.*

A friend of mine who's getting a teaching credential in Connecticut tells of finding himself, the very first week of that state's accreditation program, having to endure a lecture from one of the legions of "gender equity specialists" who now pervade the educational scene. "She went on for nearly an hour about anti-girl bias by teachers, how they start off so well, then fall behind in high school when teachers show favoritism to boys. So at the end I raised my hand and, politely as I could, asked why girls did so much better than boys in the earlier grades: could it be that elementary school teachers, who are overwhelmingly female, are biased in *their* favor? Or might there simply be differences in the ways boys and girls develop? She got furious, started going on how we men always got defensive, basically refusing to answer what she took to be a sexist question." My friend shook his head. "Afterward, four or five people very quietly thanked me—they agreed it was flat-out propaganda, incredibly unfair to boys. But of course, not one of them had spoken up. That's what they've done, spread this fear by defining honest conversation about this as evidence of bigotry."

But what's even more jarring is seeing how the spreading anti-boy ethic gets played out in the lives of ordinary people. Indeed, after years of alarmist reports, the presumption that schools chronically shortchange girls has taken hold for millions of well-meaning souls who have never heard of Carol Gilligan. Just recently, I met a woman, a nurse at a local hospital, who waxed passionate on the subject. With a daughter about to turn 13, she was desperate to get her into an all-girl private school and thus rescue her from the dire consequences of being a female in a mixed-sex environment. "This is when they start to lose their self-esteem," she explained soberly. "There are all these studies."

Almost as much as the feminist furies themselves, the *Times* and other voices of elite culture are responsible for the spread of this pernicious nonsense—now promoting the phony self-esteem crisis, now pathologizing boyhood. Indeed, for book reviewers at the paper of record, sympathy for boys is now okay—more than okay—as long as the target is nurture and not nature.

The maestro of this genre has been Gilligan acolyte William Pollack, author of the best-seller *Real Boys*. Pollack got particular attention in the wake of the Columbine tragedy, appearing incessantly on the tube (he was a regular on *Oprah*), arguing that the lunatic killers were not, in fact, grotesque aberrations, but products of the same system that afflicts millions of young men who pass as normal. "If we don't allow boys to cry tears," as he put it to one sympathetic reporter at the time, "they're going to cry bullets."

Unsurprisingly, when Sommers's book appeared this past spring, defending traditional boyhood and deriding the weeny masculinity the feminists hold up as an ideal, the press largely cold-shouldered it. It went unreviewed in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Boston Globe*, and many other papers.

But, true to form, the *Times* took on *The War Against Boys* the last Sunday in June.

The big news was not the review's content—dismissive, it all but ignored the book's central argument—but the identity of its author, child psychiatrist Robert Coles. For, incredibly enough, history seemed to be repeating itself, since Coles is a Harvard Ed School colleague of Sommers's adversary Gilligan, among the book's primary targets. Moreover, Coles's piece simultaneously reviewed, far more favorably, the new book co-authored by Sommers's other foe Pollack—who's also affiliated with Harvard. Sommers "speaks of our children," observed Coles testily, "yet she hasn't sought them out; instead she attends [to] those who have, in fact, worked with boys and girls—and in so doing is quick to look askance at Carol Gilligan's ideas about girls and William Pollack's about boys. Much of *The War Against Boys* comes across as Sommers's strongly felt war against these two prominent psychologists, who have spent years trying to learn how young men and women grow to adulthood in the United States."

Again, it was left to readers of the *Book Review* to call its editors to account. "Dare we hope that a book like Christina Hoff Sommers's *War Against Boys* might be given full and fair treatment?" demanded historian Stanley Kurtz, in a published letter. "Apparently not. Not only is the review of Sommers bundled with a review of William S. Pollack, one of her adversaries, but the reviewer himself, Robert Coles, is a Harvard colleague of both Pollack and Sommers's other chief antagonist, Carol Gilligan."

This is how matters stood when, a few weeks later, Richard Bernstein's review of *The War Against Boys* turned up in the daily *Times*. Appearing to have read an entirely different book from what Coles read, Bernstein wrote that Sommers makes her arguments "persuasively and unflinchingly, and with plenty of data to support them," and adding, in a keenly heartfelt conclusion, that her work is less polemic than entreaty. "There is a crying in the wilderness quality to her book, a sense that certain simple truths have been lost sight of in the smoky quarrelsomeness of American life."

One need hardly be a conspiracy theorist to conjure up a link between Bernstein's piece and Coles's embarrassing earlier one—or, for that matter, with the even more shockingly unfair one of several years earlier. Even the most arrogant pooh-bahs at the *Times* must be at least dimly aware by now that, in its boundless enthusiasm for the multiculturalist agenda, the paper has squandered much of its treasured credibility. "When people around here see something on feminism in the *Times*," as my friend Dennis Boyles, who once worked as an editor at the Sunday *Times Magazine*, puts it, "their first impulse is to say, 'Wait, is this really true?'"

But just as likely, the review was a lonely act of personal valor. Bernstein has for some time been a rare beacon of standards and common sense at the paper—someone, indeed, who himself has written at book length about the ills of multiculturalism (and in the process learned how it feels to be reviewed unfairly in his own paper).

In the ongoing fight against the culture's entrenched ideologues, progress comes about incrementally: as individuals, often at real personal cost, continue to tell the truth, it begins to be heard.

The tenor of the national conversation might begin to alter subtly merely because the *Times* has alerted its broad and overwhelmingly liberal readership to the possibility that what they've been told for years on the subject is false. In fact, most adolescent girls are *not* hurting and vulnerable; but rather, it is their male counterparts who are truly under siege. This insight might give at least momentary pause in a government office or corporate boardroom the next time a project aimed at fiddling with the lives of young men and women rears its malformed head, and even more to the point, it might change the thinking in innumerable private homes.

I got just a hint of this myself a few days after the piece appeared, when I ran again into the nurse with the 13-year-old daughter. Having read the review, she was confused—already a step in the right direction—and planning to buy Sommers's book. "You really just don't know who to believe anymore," she said. "I'm just going to have to look into this for myself." ■

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Oh, to be in England

Seeing Is Not Believing

Theodore Dalrymple

The first duty of the modern intellectual, wrote George Orwell, is to state the obvious, to puncture "the smelly little orthodoxies . . . now contending for our souls." Orwell meant by these the totalitarian doctrines that mesmerized the intellectuals of his time and that prevented them from accepting the most obvious and evident truths about their own and other societies: but his admonition holds true even now, when fascism and communism are dead. The demise of totalitarianism has led not to a more straightforward or honest appreciation of reality but merely to a proliferation of distorting lenses through which people choose to look at the world. If humankind, as T. S. Eliot put it, cannot bear very much reality, it seems that it can bear any amount of unreality.

The intellectual's struggle to deny the obvious is never more desperate than when reality is unpleasant and at variance with his preconceptions and when full acknowledgment of it would undermine the foundations of his intellectual worldview. Given the social history of England in the last 40 years, little wonder that collective denial should be one of the most salient characteristics of our national intellectual life.

I am in an unusual position: while I spend most of my professional life as a doctor working in the extensive lower reaches of society, I have, because of my writing, an entrée into literary society. The complacent disregard by the latter of the social catastrophe wrought in the former appalls me almost as much as the catastrophe itself. Never has so much indifference masqueraded as so much compassion; never has there been such willful blindness. The once pragmatic English have become a nation of sleepwalkers.

Recently, for example, I was invited to a lunch at a famous and venerable liberal publication, to which I occasionally contribute articles that go against its ideological grain. The publication's current owner is a *bon vivant* and excellent host who made several scores of millions in circumstances that still excite considerable public curiosity. Around the lunch table (from which, I am glad to say, British proletarian fare was strictly excluded) were gathered people of impeccable liberal credentials: the one exception being myself.

On my right sat a man in his late sixties, intelligent and cultivated, who had been a distinguished foreign correspondent for the BBC and who had spent much of his career in the United States. He said that for the last ten years he had read with interest my weekly dispatches—printed in a rival, conservative publication—depicting the spiritual, cultural, emotional, and moral chaos of modern urban life, and had always wanted to meet me to ask me a simple question: Did I make it all up?

Did I make it all up? It was a question I have been asked many times by middle-class liberal intellectuals, who presumably hope that the violence, neglect, and cruelty, the contorted thinking, the utter hopelessness, and the sheer nihilism that I describe week in and week out are but figments of a fevered imagination. In a way, I am flattered that the people who ask this question should think that I am capable of inventing the absurd yet oddly poetic utterances of my patients—that I am capable, for example, of inventing the man who said he felt like the little boy with his finger in the dike, crying wolf. But at the same time the question alarms me and reminds me of what Thackeray once said about the writings of Henry Mayhew, the chronicler of the London poor: we had but to go 100 yards off and see for ourselves, but we never did.

On being asked whether I make it all up, I reply that, far from doing so, I downplay the dreadfulness of the situation and omit the worst cases that come to my attention so as not to distress the reader unduly. The reality of English lower-class life is far more terrible than I can, with propriety, depict. My interlocutors nod politely and move on to the next subject.

It is the custom at the lunches of that famous and venerable liberal publication, once the plates have been removed, for one of the guests to speak briefly to a subject that preoccupies him at the moment. And on this occasion it was the BBC's former correspondent in the United States who spoke: eloquently and well, as one might have expected.

And what was the subject upon which he dilated with such eloquence? The iniquity of the death penalty in the United States.

It is not easy to capture the contented mood that settled round the table as he spoke, a mixture of well-fed moral superiority (one of the pleasantest of all emotions) and righteous indignation (another very pleasant emotion). The consensus was that they were benighted savages over there, while we over here, guardians as ever of civilization itself, had not resorted to such primitive and barbaric methods for ages—that is to say, for 35 years.

Everyone agreed with the BBC man, and it was my turn to say something. I confess to not being an enthusiast for the death penalty: it seems to me that the possibility of error, and the historical fact of such errors having taken place (not only in the United States but in Britain and presumably in every other jurisdiction where true due process reigns) is a powerful, if not absolutely decisive, argument against the death penalty, whatever its deterrent effect might be. And having seen photographs of execution chambers, where fatal injections are administered, decked out as if they were operating rooms in hospitals, I cannot help but feel that something sinister is going on: the pretense that execution is a therapeutic procedure. One begins to see the force of Doctor Johnson's argument that executions should be in public, in the open air, or not take place at all: at least there is no danger then that executions might be taken for something other than what they are.

But I was anxious to dispel the cozy atmosphere of rectitude, of sanctity so easily achieved without cost or effort. I said we should look closer to home, to the fact that, with the single (and admittedly important) exception of murder, crime rates in Britain were now higher, and in some cases much higher, than in the United States: and that the chief failing of our criminal-justice system was not its excessive harshness or its liability to wrongful imprisonment but its patent failure to enforce the law or to protect citizens from the most blatant lawbreaking. The result was that for untold numbers of our compatriots life was a living hell.

I briefly outlined my reasons for saying so: the vast numbers of people—thousands and possibly tens of thousands—who have told me about their lives, which are dominated by the possibility, or rather the high probability, of violence and other criminal acts being committed against them, and who quite rightly felt themselves to be totally unprotected by the police or by the courts.

Opposite me was a well-known pacifist, a man of the highest principle, who was by no means a puritan, however, at least with regard to food and wine. His shiny cheeks radiated bonhomie and self-satisfaction at the same time, and he spoke in the plummy tones of the English upper middle class.

"You know funny people," he said, leaning slightly toward me across the table.

I know funny people: I was reminded of a medical-school friend of mine whose mother, when introduced to his girlfriend, whispered in his ear, "NQOCD," the acronym for Not Quite Our Class, Dear. "Funny" those people whom I knew might be, I replied to the pacifist, but there were a lot of them, and moreover they lived in our country, often within walking—and burgling—distance of our front doors.

The man's complacency was by no means unusual. A few days earlier, I had met my publisher for lunch, and the subject of the general level of culture and education in England came up. My publisher is a cultivated man, widely read and deeply attached to literature, but I had difficulty in convincing him that there were grounds for concern. That illiteracy and innumeracy were widespread did not worry him in the least, because—he claimed—they had always been just as widespread. (The fact that we now spent four times as much per head on education as we did 50 years ago and were therefore entitled to expect rising rates of literacy and numeracy at the very least did not in the slightest knock him off his perch.) He simply did not believe me when I told him that nine out of ten young people between the ages of 16 and 20 whom I met in my practice could not read with facility and were incapable of multiplying six by nine, or that out of several hundreds of them I had asked when the Second World War took place, only three knew the answer. He replied smoothly—almost without the need to think, as if he had rehearsed the argument many times—that his own son, age seven, already knew the dates of the war.

"The trouble is," he said in all seriousness, "your sample is biased."

And true enough: everyone's experience is founded upon a biased sample. But it didn't occur to him to doubt whether his sample—of one, the son of a publisher living in a neighborhood where houses usually cost more than $1.5 million—really constituted a refutation of my experience of hundreds of cases, an experience borne out by all serious research into the matter. He accused me of moral panic, as if the only alternative to his imperturbable complacency (he was so serene you might have thought him a monk from a contemplative order) were irrational, agitated alarmism.

"Have you actually ever met any of the kind of people I'm talking about?" I asked him. He replied, not that he had, but that he supposed he must have done.

Complacency and denial dominate public as well as private discourse, and when a little of the unpleasant side of contemporary English reality is allowed an airing, a damage-control exercise swiftly ensues.

A newspaper recently asked me to go to Blackpool, a northern English resort town on the Irish Sea, to describe the conduct of the people who go there for a weekend. Blackpool has never been a place of great refinement and has long attracted people who cannot afford to go to more desirable places for their holidays. Boardinghouses rather than hotels predominate, presided over by formidable landladies. But Blackpool was, within living memory, a resort of innocent fun, with donkey rides and Punch-and-Judy shows on the beach, and a brisk sale of the mildly salacious comic postcards about which George Orwell once wrote with great sympathy and insight, in which weedy men are dominated by large, fat wives in bathing costumes, in which mothers-in-law are always battle-axes, in which unmarried men are always trying to escape the snares of marriage set for

Gulliver visits the Laputians, who see inward and upward but not right in front of them.

ILLUSTRATION BY THOMAS MORTEN

them by young women, and whose captions are always saucy *double entendres*. For example, a judge in the divorce court says to a co-respondent, "You are prevaricating, sir. Did you or did you not sleep with this woman?" to which the corespondent replies, "Not a wink, my lord!"

This sophisticated innocence has departed. Without the institution of marriage, mother-in-law and divorce jokes are pointless and passé. Fun now means public drunkenness on a mass scale, screaming in the streets, and the frequent exposure of naked buttocks to passersby. Within moments of arriving on the street along the beach, which was ankle-deep in discarded fast-food wrappings (the smell of stale fat obliterates completely the salt smell of the sea), I saw a woman who had pulled down her slacks and tied a pair of plastic breasts to her bare buttocks, while a man crawled after her on the sidewalk, licking them. At midnight along this street—with the sound of rock music pounding insistently out of every club door, and each door presided over by a pair of steroid-inflated bouncers, among men vomiting into the gutters, and with untold numbers of empty bags of marijuana on the pavement—I saw children as young as six, unattended by adults, waiting for their parents to emerge from their nocturnal recreations.

On the day after the publication of my article, I appeared briefly on the BBC's main breakfast-time radio program, which has an audience of several million. The interviewer was an intelligent and cultivated woman, and having briefly and accurately summarized for the readers my account of what I saw in Blackpool, she then asked me, "Aren't you being a toff?"—that is to say, a social and cultural snob.

The question was, of course, a loaded one, with many layers of deeply derogatory implication. I in turn asked her whether she would herself bare her buttocks to passing strangers, and if she wouldn't, why not? She declined to answer this question, as if it were not serious—just as a future government minister with whom I once appeared on the radio, after asserting that one of the tragedies of some recent urban riots was that they had taken place in the rioters' poor inner-city neighborhood, refused to answer when I asked her if she would rather the riots had taken place in her own rich neighborhood.

Not long after the interview about my experiences in Blackpool, the BBC broadcast letters from a few listeners, who charged that I had failed to understand the nature of working-class culture. They used the word "culture" here in the anthropological sense of the sum total of a way of life, but they were also taking cunning and dishonest advantage of the word's connotations of Bach and Shakespeare to insinuate that the wearing of plastic breasts on the Blackpool promenade is indistinguishable in value from the *B-Minor Mass* or the sonnets.

The liberal assumption, in this as in most things, is that to understand is to approve (or at least to pardon), and therefore my disapproval indicated a lack of understanding. But strangely enough, the letters that the BBC and the newspaper that published the original article forwarded to me—those they hadn't broadcast or published—wholly endorsed my comments. They were from Blackpool residents and from working-class people elsewhere who passionately denied that working-class culture had always consisted of nothing but mindless obscenity. Several writers spoke very movingly of enduring real poverty in childhood while maintaining self-respect and a striving for mental distinction. The deliberate exclusion of these voices from public expression provided a fine example of how the British intelligentsia goes about its self-appointed task of cultural destruction.

Violence, vulgarity, and educational failure: three aspects of modern English life that are so obvious and evident that it requires little observational power to discern them. Indeed, it requires far more mental effort and agility *not* to discern them, to screen them out of one's consciousness: the scenes in Blackpool, for example, being only slightly worse and more extreme than those to be seen in the center of every English town and city every Saturday night of the year.

It is worth examining the mental mechanisms that liberal intellectuals use to disguise the truth from themselves and others, and to ask why they do so.

Oh, to be in England

First, there is outright denial. Increasing crime, for example, was long dismissed as a mere statistical artifact, before the sheer weight of the evidence overwhelmed the possibility of denial. It wasn't so much crime that was increasing, we were told, as people's willingness or ability to report it—via the spread of the telephone. As to educational failure, it was long denied by the production of statistics showing that more and more children were passing public examinations, a classic half-truth that omitted to say that these examinations had deliberately been made so easy that it was impossible to fail them (the concept of failure having been abolished), except by not turning up for them. But even the most liberal of university professors has now noticed that his students can't spell or punctuate.

Second, there is the tendentious historical comparison or precedent. Yes, it is admitted, violence and vulgarity are a large part of modern British life; but they always were. When English soccer fans ran amok in France during the European cup finals (the kind of behavior now universally expected of them), even the conservative *Daily Telegraph* ran an article to the effect that it was ever thus, and that Hanoverian England was a riotous, drunken era—thereby implying that there was nothing to be alarmed about. For some reason not fully explained, it is supposed to be a comfort—even a justification—that antisocial behavior has persisted unabated over hundreds of years. In the same way, intellectuals depict alarm over rising crime as unreasonable (and those who express it as lacking in historical knowledge), because it is not difficult to find historical epochs when crime was worse than it is now. I have even seen worry about a rising murder rate treated with mockery, because in medieval England it was very much higher than it is now. Thus, historical comparison with a period hundreds of years ago is held up as more relevant than comparison with 30 or even ten years ago, as long as that comparison fosters an attitude of complacency toward undesirable social phenomena.

Third, once the facts are finally admitted under the duress of accumulated evidence, their moral significance is denied or perverted. Do children emerge from school as ignorant of facts as when they entered? Well, of course: this is because they are no longer taught by rote but instead are taught how to go about finding information for themselves. Their inability to write legibly in no way lessens their ability to express themselves but rather accentuates it. At least they have not been subjected to the learning of arbitrary rules. Vulgarity is liberty from unhealthy and psychologically deforming inhibition; it is merely the revival of popular bawdy, and those who oppose it are elitist killjoys. As to violence, any quantity of it can be explained away by reference to the "structural violence" of capitalist society.

A BBC television producer recently outlined the phases of liberal denial for me. His colleagues, he told me, regarded him as a maverick, a tilter at windmills, almost a madman. And what was his madness? He wanted the BBC to make unvarnished documentaries about life in the lower third of society: about the mass (and increasing) illiteracy, the mass (and increasing) illegitimacy and single parenthood, the mass (and increasing) hooliganism, violence, lawlessness, drug taking, welfare dependency, and hopelessness, so that the rest of the population might begin to take stock of what was happening on their very doorstep. And he wanted, in particular, to concentrate on the devastating effects of the fragmentation—no, the atomization—of the family that liberal legislation, social engineering, and cultural attitudes since the late 1950s have so powerfully promoted.

His BBC superiors greeted his proposals with condescension. First, they denied the facts. When he produced irrefutable evidence of their existence, they accused him of moral panic. When he proved that the phenomena to which the facts pointed were both serious and spreading rapidly up the social scale, they said that there was nothing that could be done about them, because they were an inevitable part of modern existence. When he said that they were the result of deliberate policy, they asked him whether he wanted to return to the bad old days when spouses who hated each other were forced to live together. And when he said that what had been done could be undone, at least in part, they produced their ace of trumps: the subject was *not interesting,* so there was no point in making programs about it. The British public would be left to sleepwalk its way undisturbed through the social disaster from which a fragile economic prosperity will certainly not protect it.

But why so insistent a denial of the obvious by the very class of people whose primary function, one might have supposed, was to be what the Russians called truth bearers?

The answer is to be sought in the causative relationship between the ideas that liberal intellectuals advocated and put into practice and every disastrous social development of the last four decades. They saw their society as being so unjust that nothing in it was worth preserving; and they thought that all human unhappiness arose from the arbitrary and artificial fetters that their society placed on the satisfaction of appetite. So dazzled were they by their vision of perfection that they could not see the possibility of deterioration.

And so if family life was less than blissful, with all its inevitable little prohibitions, frustrations, and hypocrisies, they called for the destruction of the family as an institution. The destigmatization of illegitimacy went hand in hand with easy divorce, the extension of marital rights to other forms of association between adults, and the removal of all the fiscal advantages of marriage. Marriage melted as snow in sunshine. The destruction of the family was, of course, an important component and consequence of sexual liberation, whose utopian program was to have increased the stock of innocent sensual pleasure, not least among the liberators themselves. It resulted instead in widespread violence consequent upon sexual insecurity and in the mass neglect of children, as people became ever more egotistical in their search for momentary pleasure.

If liberal intellectuals recalled their childhood experiences of education as less than an unalloyed joy, education had to become a form of childish entertainment: for who, in any case, were mere adults to impose their ideas on those equally sentient beings, their children? Were not grammar and arithmetic—indeed all disciplines—mere bourgeois (or, in America, racist) tools with which to maintain social hegemony? And self-respect being radically incompatible with failure, the very idea of failure itself had to go. The only way to achieve this was to do away with education altogether—an experiment that could be carried out in full only on that section of the population least concerned about education in the first place, thus creating a now-hereditary caste of ineducables.

And if crime was a problem, it was only because an unjust society forced people into criminal activity, and therefore punishment constituted a double injustice, victimizing the real victim. By what right could an unjust society claim to impose its version of justice? Empathy and understanding were what was needed, provided they absolved the criminal of his responsibility. The creation of a universal disposition to do good, and not the creation of fear of the consequences of doing evil, was what was needed to extirpate crime. Not surprisingly, these were glad tidings to those tempted by the life of crime and demoralizing ones to those who upheld the law.

Every liberal prescription worsened the problem that it was ostensibly designed to solve. But every liberal intellectual had to deny that obvious consequence or lose his Weltanschauung: for what shall it profit an intellectual, if he acknowledge a simple truth and lose his Weltanschauung? Let millions suffer, so long as he can retain his sense of his own righteousness and moral superiority. Indeed, if millions suffer, they are additional compassion fodder for him, and the more of their pain will he so generously feel.

And so the prescription is: more of the same. The Liberal Democrat Party, Britain's third party, which is dominated by the middle-class liberal intelligentsia and is gaining an unthinking popularity born of disillusionment with the government and of the patent incompetence of the official opposition, recently held its annual conference. And what were the most important proposals put forward there? The legal recognition of homosexual marriage and shorter prison sentences for criminals.

Nero was a committed firefighter by comparison. ■

Letters

Après Moi, Le Deluge?

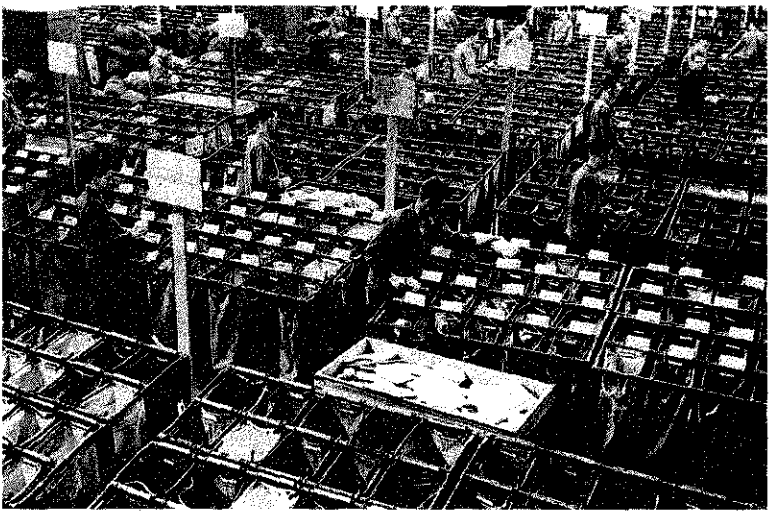
To the editor:

I quite take William J. Stern's point about the "New York state of mind," as Billy Joel put it. [See "Why New York Democrats Love Hillary," Soundings, Summer 2000.] And you are quite right about the energy-producing states and the Clinton proposal for a BTU tax as part of the 1993 tax package. As your analysis would indicate, it passed the population-based House, but got nowhere in the state-apportioned Senate.

On the other hand, we did get a 4.3-cent gasoline-tax increase. The secret there is that New York gets back $1.18 for every $1 it contributes to the Highway Trust Fund. This is the result of a complicated formula that we were able to change in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. As chairman of finance I thought that was some compensation for the income-tax hike. (We had to deal with that deficit, and have done so. Don't you think?)

I would point to another problem. In those southern and western capitals they seem to know what goes on in Washington. Not with us. That ISTEA legislation was the result of a rare conjunction. The House chairman of the conference committee was Bob Roe of New Jersey. I was Senate chair. We knew exactly what we were doing. I even got us $5 billion as repayment for the Thruway. Never had a postcard from Albany. Nor anything I can point to as a result.

Hon. Daniel Patrick Moynihan
Pindars Corners, NY



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William J. Stern responds:

I'm glad that Senator Moynihan agrees that New York politicians don't adequately represent the state's long-term regional interests—his own efforts aside. But can we expect the situation to improve if the New York Democratic Party's chosen candidate, Hillary Clinton—with her rootless ideology and national ambitions—is elected as his replacement? One wonders how the senator views the prospect.

Ivory Tower Ghetto

To the editor:

Would that only British slums tortured the intelligent and sensitive. The inner-city high school where I teach doesn't blight young minds to the extent described in Theodore Dalrymple's "Lost in the Ghetto" [Summer 2000], but these youngsters head off to universities where their best instincts will be subverted by the spirit-sapping, nihilistic egalitarianism that pervades American higher education. After just the freshman year, they often return with the trusting, confident light in their eyes already extinguished. The most sensitive—usually those in the humanities—fare the worst. As one young man said, "If everything sucks, why bother with anything?" He dropped out, not because of poor grades or lack of funding, but from boredom.

All too often today, higher education shrivels souls just as slums do. What should be the escape from intellectual and cultural poverty has become its entranceway.

Major Richard Rail
U.S. Army (Ret.)
Phoenix, AZ

Home Sweet Home Schooling

To the editor:

Congratulations and thanks for a splendid article on home education ("An A for Home Schooling," Summer 2000). I have shared it with several folks—including my wife, who, though

Letters

typically critical of "overviews" of home education, praised yours.

Douglas Dewey
Chief Operating Officer
Children's Scholarship Fund

To the editor:

I once helped my oldest son with a fifth-grade report on subatomic particles, which included a diagram of a quark. We used a *National Geographic* magazine—one several years old—for reference. The science teacher said that the material in the report was all news to her. She had never even heard of a quark. It wasn't too long after that that I began to investigate home schooling. Why limit oneself to learning at the narrow, socialist, one-size-fits-all public schools? Thank you for a solid, positive piece about the future of education in America.

Robert Clark
via e-mail

To the editor:

A resounding thank you to Brian C. Anderson for his excellent, well-researched article on home schooling. I am the mother of two, and we are entering our second year of home schooling. I faced a lot of opposition from family and friends when we started, but within seven months, we had achieved our goals for the year: my six-year-old learned to read, tell time, and carry and borrow in addition and subtraction, among other things. I saved Anderson's article to encourage other new home-schooling parents who may face opposition. I also forwarded it to our local support group and various family members.

Sue Gorecki
Pittsburgh, PA

To the editor:

As a home-educating parent of three, I always find it refreshing to see a favorable journalistic piece on the subject.

However, I take issue with one thing in your article: "But the public does have a legitimate interest in making sure that home-schooled kids get educated and that, say, a dysfunctional foster care family isn't yanking its children out of school to use them as laborers." Most home-schooling families recognize that their vested interest in their children's education so far surpasses any public interest that, in the vast majority of cases, failure is not an option. If parents fail to educate their children, then the parents will take the brunt of supporting an unemployable adult child. There are already laws on the books that protect children from the scenario you describe.

You seem to fall prey to the stereotype—which the rest of your article speaks against—that home-educated children are isolated and kept out of public view. This is exactly what the NEA-types want Americans to believe about home education. Their fear-mongering is understandable, since they face a loss of power and tax money. But home-educating families recognize their responsibility, both to their children and their communities—in many cases, more acutely than others. If we did not take these responsibilities to heart, can any serious inquirer believe that home education could have grown so widespread in so short a time?

Christine Stout
Batavia, IL

Brian C. Anderson responds:

While I agree with Ms. Stout's characterization of the NEA's calumny against home schooling, I do believe there is a public interest in making sure kids get educated. I argued for home-schooling regulation that would be maximally flexible and non-intrusive. But some kind of regulation is necessary to guard against potential abuses. Parents should not have an unlimited right to teach their child nothing—a possibility, it seems, that Stout leaves open.

Thanks to Ms. Stout and all the other letter writers for their often moving comments.

A Plea from Fifth Avenue

To the editor:

Heather Mac Donald is certainly correct that post-Diallo criticism of the NYPD made this year's ill-policed Puerto Rican Day parade particularly unruly. [See "America's Best Urban Police Force," Summer 2000.] But for years now, the parade has been a horrible experience for all residents along its path. The parade as such may be a right, but the neighboring streets wind up utterly trashed. Gangs of aggressive youths cruise the area, sometimes abusing pedestrians.

Should not the parade take place in an area convenient to where the participants live and are known?

John Train
New York, NY

City Journal welcomes letters to the editor. Our address: City Journal,
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Maggie Gallagher is the co-author of *The Case for Marriage* and director of the marriage program at the Institute for American Values.

Howard Husock is director of case studies at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and a *City Journal* contributing editor. An Emmy Award–winning journalist, he is the author of *Repairing the Ladder: Towards a New Housing Policy Paradigm,* and has written for the *Wall Street Journal* and *The Public Interest.*

Stefan Kanfer, a contributing editor of *City Journal* and a former editor of *Time,* is the author of several novels and social histories. His new books are *Groucho,* a biography of Groucho Marx, and *The Essential Groucho.*

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Arthur C. Lohsen is an architect practicing in Washington, D.C. Among his projects with classicist Allan Greenberg are residences in New York City and Helsinki, Finland.

Heather Mac Donald is a contributing editor of *City Journal,* John M. Olin Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, and author of *The Burden of Bad Ideas: How Modern Intellectuals Misshape Our Society.* Her articles have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal, The New Republic,* and the *New York Times.*

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Harry Stein is a new contributing editor of *City Journal.* A journalist and novelist, he is most recently the author of *How I Accidently Joined the Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy: (And Found Inner Peace).*

William J. Stern is a contributing editor of *City Journal.* He chaired New York governor Mario Cuomo's 1982 campaign and from 1983 to 1985 headed the state's Urban Development Corporation.

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EU **Diarist**

Free at Last

Theodore Dalrymple

I grew up in a free country: or so at least I thought. I had no fear of arbitrary arrest; I could go anywhere I liked, even to North Korea, when I had the strange desire to do so; I could say anything I liked. At 13, I impertinently heckled my local member of Parliament, a government minister, without even a flicker of fear of the consequences. This freedom was like the air I breathed: it was part of my inheritance; I didn't give it a moment's thought.

It seems I was mistaken. In order to submit to the unelected bureaucrats of the EU, the government has given me a freedom higher and better than the merely political freedom to govern myself democratically that I previously possessed. The government has decided that I was oppressed all along, and it has passed an EU-styled Human Rights Act to release me from my chains.

I've seen some real chains in my time. When I arrived in the Gilbert Islands, in the central Pacific, many of the psychiatric patients in the hospital there had been chained to the walls—for years. When I suggested that they should be released, the keepers told me that it was too dangerous to do so. When I insisted, they told me that they had lost the keys, which was the real reason the patients had been attached to the walls with nine inches of chain, year in, year out.

In a Nigerian prison, I saw a raving lunatic chained to the ground. He was kept in complete isolation. The alternative, however, was gross overcrowding, so perhaps he was fortunate. This was at a time when the Nigerian Civil Liberties organization estimated that 2,000 people a year starved to death in Nigerian prisons. And it was certainly true that, had it not been for a valiant Irish nun in her seventies, who arrived every day at the prison with buckets of food, the prisoners I saw would have had nothing to eat.

As it was, 70 of them were crowded into a room big enough for ten. They were never allowed out; most of them had scabies, and several were dying of TB. Many of them had been held without trial for up to ten years and would never now be tried or released. The release of a few had been ordered by judges, but these fortunate ones could not afford to bribe the jailers to let them out.

Whenever I went to Nigeria, I visited Ken Saro-Wiwa, the writer whom a military tribunal subsequently tried—unjustly, of course—and then brutally hanged. It took five attempts at the noose to kill him.

In Liberia, another West African country, I visited Field Marshal Brigadier-General Prince Y. Johnson. It was advisable to meet him in the morning, I was told, because by the afternoon he was usually high on drugs and drink, and a little free and easy with the Kalashnikov. I had seen the video of him ordering the torture of the trussed-up and naked former Liberian president, Samuel Doe, to extract from him the numbers of his bank accounts in London and Switzerland. The field marshal, swigging a can of Heineken, ordered that Doe's ears be cut off with a kitchen knife—as they were.

In Albania, I met a man who had been sent down to the mines for 15 years for refusing to renounce his religion. Even private prayer was considered a serious offense, as was any attempt to escape the atheist paradise. And if a man did escape, his entire family was punished, down to the children: in other words, the entire population was held hostage. In the Baltic states I met people who, during their childhood, had always slept in all the clothes they possessed, because it was at three in the morning that people were hauled off for deportation to frozen climes—as a tenth of the population was in fact deported.

And what of *our* human rights? One of the first fruits of the recent legislation was a case brought (at public expense, it goes without saying) by the prime minister's wife, by coincidence an enormously well-paid human-rights lawyer. A mentally subnormal pedophile, who had been convicted of 13 sexual offenses, was released from jail on condition that he not consort with children under the age of 16. This, said the prime minister's wife, was a denial of his human right to free association.

Free at last, free at last, thank Blair Almighty, we're free at last! ■

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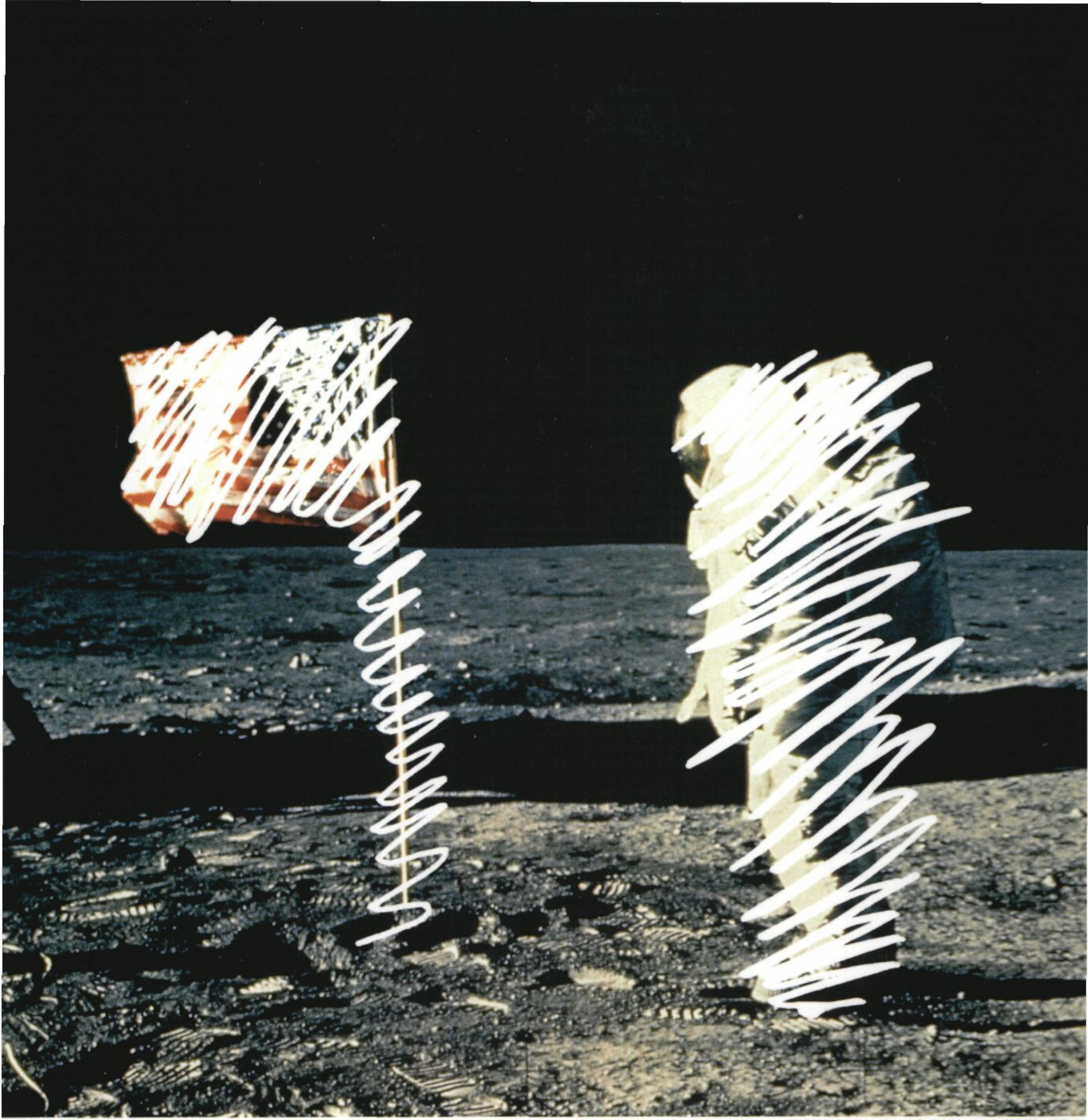

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